

A COLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR THE RESTORATION
AND RENEWAL OF EX-OFFENDERS
RETURNING TO SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

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This project will address the issue of reentry of offenders into the Waycross-Ware County community. It will explore the motivation of the faith community to participate in a model to facilitate the transition of inmates from incarceration to a productive role in society. It will connect community leaders with members of the judicial system, parole department and probation office. We will use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research design with a pre-survey and a post-survey, as well as a questionnaire to measure the effectiveness of the program.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband William M. Shorter who gave me the space I needed to accomplish this goal. This project is dedicated to my family, my parents, the late Aaron C. and Willie Mae King, who provided spiritual guidance and encouragement to pursue my educational goals. I also dedicate this to my son Serge King and wife Roni, my daughter Jeanine Brown and husband Stephen, and all the grandchildren: Lauren, Sierra, Jordan, Cameron, Aaron and Evan. Special thanks to Jordan for calling me frequently to see if I had completed my papers.

This endeavor is also dedicated to my siblings: Roosevelt Ferguson, Robert King, Janie Ferguson Nix, Harriett Ferguson Smith, Lynette Ferguson Wrice and my sister-in-law Jacqueline Neal Ferguson, as well as my nieces, nephews and cousins.

To my friends Ola Irvin and Rosa Bobia and also to Carene Greene, whose house I used for a refuge to escape when I needed peace, quiet and food in order to work, this work is dedicated to you.

To the congregation at Bethel – St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church, Waycross, Georgia, whose support was most valuable, you are a living testament to God's word and this project is dedicated to you.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
UTS	United Theological Seminary

There is not a single offence which does not, directly or indirectly affect many others besides the actual offender. Hence, whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern but really the concern of the whole community, nay, of the whole world.

— Mahatma Gandhi, Anil Mishra, *Reading Gandhi*

INTRODUCTION

I will explore the area of ex-offender reentry and expound on how the faith community can touch the lives of the persons who are reentering. Through collaboration with members of the community, the judicial system, the probation office and parole department, it is possible to effectuate change in recidivism rates. The need is great for the faith community to participate in the spiritual transformation of its returning citizens.

A reality in today's society is that the prison population in the United States is the largest in the world.¹ In America, there is a prison-complex industry wherein some of the incarcerated are farmed out to work in private industry. Another reality is that over 95 percent of persons in prison today will one day be released. Another glaring aspect is that many persons who are presently moving about in society are ex-offenders. Many of them are unemployable and having problems with substance abuse. What then is the church's response to this grave issue?

Michael Smith, Sr., author and prison chaplain, offers some practical steps that the church can take to respond to lives impacted by crime and incarceration:

1. One should share God's truth, grace and mercy with inmates in jail and prisons and returning citizens.
2. The churches should preach and teach the value of human life in ways that encourage social stability, decency, and civility.

¹ Michael B. Kelley and Christina Sterbenz, "Law and Order: This World Map Shows The Enormity of America's Prison Problem," *Business Insider*, January 24, 2014, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com>.

3. The churches should receive into care and fellowship those persons who have been placed on parole and those recently released from prison.
4. It is vital that the churches focus on bringing biblical perspective and understanding to the various issues of crime and incarceration which is essential in order to maintain the relationship of justice and mercy in prison ministry
5. The church should intentionally promote awareness about issues related to crime and incarceration through relevant activities, special worship services and conferences that educate and equip the church to make a difference.
6. The churches should convey through the word of God and their actions that all persons are of immense value to God, including those who have broken the law, as well as those whose lives have been affected by crime and punishment.
7. The churches must emphasize that no one is excluded from God's love or beyond redemption, no matter what the person has done.²

It is the belief of some that the gospel is directed even to ex-offenders. By this I mean that intentional efforts are being made to engage this segment of society in not only rehabilitation as a citizen but also to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, thus disciplining them. Notable of persons engaged in this endeavor is Charles Colson, himself of the Watergate convictions, who was also an ex-offender. He started a ministry known today as Prison Fellowship Ministries. It is his belief that if this segment of the population is engaged in such a ministry, they too would come into discipleship and have a place of acceptance and work in the life of the church.

I am convinced that a model of ministry that is designed to reach this group, along with the membership of the church, could include such areas as preaching the gospel on themes of forgiveness, reconciliation and love, coupled with bible study on these subjects. Also, it has been pointed out that some of the most prominent persons in leadership in the bible could be considered felons by their acts and deeds; yet, God used them in a mighty way in the unfolding drama of forgiveness, redemption and leadership.

² Michael R. Smith, Sr., "The Ministry of the Prison Chaplain," in *Ministry with Prisoners and Families: The Way Forward*, eds., W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Charles E. Lewis, Jr. and Harold Dean Trulear (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 161-162.

Such a ministry could include having ex-offenders participate in educational forums and hear from people in the criminal justice system, as well as those in the areas of psychology and sociology, which address the problems that led these individuals to a life of crime and how they can resolve them. This ministry could also focus on improving decision-making skills. Using small groups and assigning mentors could help this population improve interpersonal relationships

One thing is certain: nothing ventured, nothing gained. In pockets of various communities, there are individuals engaged in prison ministry more so than a ministry to ex-offenders. Through these efforts of the people of faith, along with the power of the Holy Spirit, lives can and will be transformed. The introduction of this document explains the project.

Chapter One highlights my spiritual journey. It details my preparation for ministry and the call on my life to be of service to others. I realized that the faith community has not served the portion of society that needs to be transitioned back into the community after incarceration.

Chapter Two expounds on the biblical foundations for my project. In the Old Testament, I chose Jeremiah 31:1-6 which speaks to forgiveness, unification, restoration and spiritual renewal. The Old Testament scripture expands the belief that God will give a second chance to those who believe in Him. For the New Testament, I chose Philemon verses 10-11 because it illustrates that a person's status can change. This scripture illustrates the real key to reentry into society, which is to have someone willing to assist in the process as Paul did for Onesimus.

Chapter Three expounds on the historical foundations. It traces the evolution of prison and prison ministries. It presents the involvement of the church in the reform of prisons and the factors that govern incarceration today.

Chapter Four examines the theological foundations of the project. It expounds on the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of grace. It considers the position of scholars on the redemption of people who have committed crimes and the relevance of theology to the oppressed.

Chapter Five expounds upon the theoretical foundations of the project. It explicates the social, psychological, economic, educational and mental challenges associated with reentry. It illuminates the role of society in the successful reentry of ex-offenders.

Chapter Six explains the methodology and design used for the project. This chapter gives an outline of how the project was initiated. It describes the field experience and gives an overview of the implementation of the project. This chapter includes the narrative, summary and conclusion, as well as suggestions for future projects.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Early Years

Born the last child to Willie Mae Young and Aaron Curtis King in Waycross, Georgia, my early years were pleasant. My parents only went to the fifth grade, but spoke good English and did not allow their children to do any less. Mother graduated from cosmetology school. She had three other children who lived with their grandparents over seventy miles away. Living with their grandparents was another grandchild, who by virtue of extended family rule, became my sister as well. My father had another son whom I met at the age of twelve. Early childhood was rather uneventful. It was revealed to the family that our great-grandmother on my mother's side was a full blooded Cherokee Indian.

My mother was always sad for having to leave her children behind because their grandparents got custody of them in the divorce because they had a farm and therefore visible means of support. We would go often on the weekends to visit my siblings and take them things. My sisters would sometimes come during the summer; they were nine and ten years older than me, but my brother never came.

The beginning of my spiritual journey was with my mother reading John 14 each night as my bedtime story. We were a church-going family. My mother went to

Macedonia Baptist Church, and my father went to King Solomon United Methodist Church which afforded me the opportunity of going to both churches.

Uniting with Macedonia Baptist Church at age twelve gave me the chance to sing with the choir, join the church-sponsored Girl Scout Troup, participate in Sunday School, Baptist Training Union, summer camp in Lovejoy, Georgia, and Camp John Hope in Fort Valley, Georgia. We travelled a lot visiting family in Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina. It was exciting for me to make the trip to Miami, Florida; it was my first experience hearing people who spoke a language other than English. This contact inspired me to take classes in Spanish and French later on.

As a young child, my dad allowed me to help him with what we might now call the cottage industry. Though he had a regular job with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, we grew sugar cane for sale and planted sweet potatoes, peas and okra. My rows were always crooked, but I blamed the mule that was pulling the plow. However, my dad made me realize it was not the mule but how I held the plow. We tore down houses, stacked lumber and cleaned bricks. We cut cross ties and took nails out of old lumber. Mother worked at King Edward Cigar Factory and at the same time worked at her beauty shop at home. We were never rich, but because my parents worked and carried on various business ventures, we did not lack for any necessities and were able to help other people. It was my job to tend to the chickens at home and to help family friends when it was planting season. At harvest time, those who helped with the planting were given food. When we saved food (swill) for friends who raised hogs, we were given meat at slaughter time. My parents helped me understand ways through which the family could make a

good living beyond their limited salaries and how families worked together to help each other survive.

When we moved into town, my responsibilities changed to helping cord wood for the wood yard with my dad and to cleaning and cooking with my mom. My mom would go to the docks in Darien on the weekend and get fresh fish off the boat and bring them home to sell. In all that, we made it to church each Sunday. The church provided sanctuary from the ills of society and provided lots of activities, beach trips, picnics, and excursions to parks where blacks were allowed in the pool. We had dedicated people who insisted that we maintain a high level of decorum, respect as well as social and civic training.

My junior year in high school required much thought about the future. Three of my classmates were rather surreptitiously selected to bring money to register for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (S.A.T). They were the teacher's daughter, the preacher's daughter and the photographer's son. However, they shared the information, and I brought my money, registered, and sat for the exam as well. These three classmates were used as instruments of God, setting in motion that which would be a most extraordinary post-secondary educational journey taking me from my small town in southeast Georgia, USA, to places all around the world. Based on my S.A.T. scores, a college offered me a scholarship and early admission to come to college at the end of my junior year in high school. However, since neither I nor my parents had a clear understanding of the process, I decided to stay and get a high school diploma in my hand. My parents reminded me that a bird in the hand was better than two in the bush; therefore, the conclusion was that it would be better for me to finish high school. That same year the cigar factory where my

mother worked offered scholarships to all the children of workers. (Colored children had heretofore not been included). The photographer's son and I went to Jacksonville University and took the test to qualify. We were the only black students there taking the test, and our test scores were higher than the white students who took the test; thus, we were both awarded John H. Swisher Scholarships. This scholarship paid my way through college for four years. The only stipulation was to maintain a B+ average each semester.

Young Adults Years

My senior year in high school and young adult years were relatively seamless, and the hills were made easy to climb. I recognized that truly it was God that kept me from hurt, harm, danger and poverty. My church taught me to love, trust and depend on God, but also never to question God. Graduating from high school fifth in my class (1962) and moving to Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina gave me a chance to seek answers to many questions. My arrival was right in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement. A lot of questioning was necessary to summon the courage to participate in a non-violent movement when the people who claimed to be the bearers of Christianity around the world were perpetrating all manner of evil against us in the name of the same God we were all supposed to worship.

It had always been told to me that the only way to really learn a foreign language was to go to the country. As a French major at Bennett, the nearest place was Laval University in Quebec, Canada, where they offered a great six-week summer immersion program in French. A scholarship was requested and awarded by the Canadian Government. Upon my return to Bennett, it was revealed to me that the school had

selected me to participate in a student exchange to Mount Holyoke. The program was designed to promote racial understanding.

It appeared to me that God was really opening the windows of heaven and pouring out blessings. At the end of my sophomore year, the opportunity came to study Spanish in a six-week immersion program in Mexico City at Universidad Ibero-Americana. With a round-trip bus ticket, \$200 and proof of a scholarship from the Mexican Government, my language learning continued. Furthermore, with the grace and favor of God, my junior year was spent back at Laval University in their Junior Year Abroad program in French Language and Literature. The weather was very cold in Quebec, but the atmosphere was warm, and one could feel free to thrive and develop intellectually away from the racial hatred and tension that surrounded me at home. The Lord allowed me to see the world from a different perspective.

My senior year found me back at Bennett making sure all my requirements would be met for graduation. That year the honor was bestowed upon me to be inducted into the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society. My student teaching was completed which would allow me to become certified in education. My parents considered it a must to get teaching credentials since that was one of the respected professions of my little community. It has served me well.

My graduation was in June of 1966. It was a joyous time, yet fraught with sadness because my father died in January of 1966 and my desire was for him to witness my graduation and to make him proud that perseverance won out. My mother, an aunt and two of my siblings attended the graduation. There was still an amount of anger harbored at God because my father was taken from me.

One of my goals was to become an interpreter, which led me to apply for a Fulbright Fellowship to study in France following graduation. To my surprise, an award was granted for me to receive a Fulbright Fellowship for France (1966-1967) to attend the University of Besançon, France. It was a delight to have the opportunity to actually study French in France. Getting there entailed six days sailing on the SS France. It took a leap of faith to be on the ocean for so many days. The ship stopped in South Hampton, England and then went on to Le Havre, France where we disembarked. From Le Havre, we were transported to Paris. We lived in the United States House, which was a dormitory provided by the United States government for its exchange students. Other countries provided housing nearby for their students which made this area an international village. The first few weeks were spent in Paris for orientation. It was exciting to be in Paris to see all the famous sites and to be at the famous Sorbonne. Before going on to Besançon, we went with a group to visit Vienna, Salzburg, and Innsbruck in Austria. We also went to West Germany and saw the wall that divided Berlin. Life in Besançon was idyllic. We explored the mysteries of literature and philosophy and studied the etymology and nuances of language which was a lot of help when introduced to the terms exegesis, and hermeneutics.

Traveling through Europe exposed me to the fantastic art and architecture of the great cathedrals and the great opera houses, and the remaining vestiges of the Roman Empire. Having the opportunity to view the Coliseum, the catacombs and to actually go inside the Vatican and inside of the Sistine Chapel and viewing the magnificent paintings of Michelangelo stimulated my interest in the history of Christianity. My trip to Rome, Italy, also added to my inspiration to investigate teachings of the bible, just as my visit to

other places sparked an interest in world history. The trip to the Coliseum brought forth images of the Christians being fed to the lions.

Special student- rate travel packages were available to students during spring break, which made it possible to cruise from Venice, Italy, to cities in Greece, Turkey and Israel, stopping to visit Cyprus, Crete, and Mikonos and even view the Isle of Patmos.

The experience of being in Athens, Greece, and seeing the historic sites was overwhelming. Exciting could barely describe the fact that in Turkey, the group got to see and actually go inside of the church that Paul established in Ephesus. We were also able to see what was left of the temple of Diana of which Paul spoke. Moreover, the trip to Israel allowed me to envision the scriptures as we visited Jerusalem, ascended Mt. Zion, visited the place where Jesus lived with his family, walk along the river Jordan, the Sea of Galilee, and the Via Dolorosa.

When classes ended at Besançon, with the use of the Eurail pass, trips were made to Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. I had only heard of the land of the midnight sun, but finally witnessed it. After visiting Germany, Monaco and Spain, it was back to France, followed by the long ship ride back to the USA.

My return from Europe held many surprises. My application for a job in my home town was accepted, but the assignment was to teach French and Spanish at the all-white high school. Our town was in the middle of school desegregation. At that school there were ten black students assigned. My mother's daily prayer was that her daughter would return home from work unharmed.

The excitement for the town that year (the early spring of 1968) was that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Waycross before going on to Memphis and spoke at Greater Mt. Zion AME Church and encouraged the people to persist and not give up the struggle in the movement towards equality.

The summer after my first year of teaching I went to Middlebury Graduate School of French in Vermont in 1968 to begin work on a Master's Degree in French. Upon my return, my familial entrepreneurial spirit took hold and led me to open a confectionary in my town and provide a place in the back where black teenagers could safely congregate. In addition, that same spirit also pushed me toward helping a friend start a newspaper.

The opportunity arose for a new job with twice the pay so it was off to New York to work at an advertising agency. My spiritual journey seemed to take a turn in New York toward the dark side where interest was engendered toward witchcraft and scientology. The scientology eventually appeared to lend itself toward mind control and it was ditched quickly. I came to misinterpret the scripture about Satan being the god of this world and questioned who we should be serving. My life was quite different after this decision to explore this other realm. The hedge that seemed to surround me began to erode and trials and tribulations began to filter through. Fortunately, again my inner spirit would not allow me to delve too deeply.

After deciding to leave New York, my first stop was Charlotte, North Carolina, where there was a position available with a group called Progress Association for Economic Development. The program was housed at Johnson C. Smith University. While reevaluating my life, a car accident occurred finally resulting in my return to Waycross to recuperate.

During this time, my focus was to really seek the Lord, the God of my fathers, to find out what my relationship was to be. While flipping through pages, the scripture that my eyes trained upon was 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 reminding me that the word is hid from them that are lost whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world. In light of this shocking revelation, there came upon me a desire to search for new enlightenment by re-reading the bible from cover to cover while recuperating from the accident.

After about three months of physical therapy, a temporary teaching job became available in Camden County. At the same time, applications were made to the U.S. Department of State and to graduate school at Atlanta University. Acceptance to Atlanta University came first followed by acceptance and clearance to the State Department which would begin upon completion of the Master's degree program. My focus was on black literature of French expression. My thesis was on a Haitian writer, Jean Brière.

After graduation, my excitement and enthusiasm exuded as my work at the State Department began. After orientation, the assignment was to the consular office at the Consulate in Haiti. The first assignment was the American citizen services section to deal with issues of Americans citizens living in or visiting Haiti. It became my duty to work in the visa section where there was much delusion on my part at the appalling treatment of the Haitians that presented as opposed to the Europeans and Arabs, especially Saudis that streamed through. Adhering to my own brand of liberation theology I allowed some not so wealthy applicants to receive visas, which would later be the source of deep regret.

Although the country was outwardly Catholic and Protestant, much voodoo was still practiced and mixed with the Christian practices. Therefore, Haiti was the perfect place to continue my interest in the occult and follow a quest for information. During this

time, the Lord revealed himself in many ways and refuted any lingering interest in other religions.

A missionary, Eleanor Workman, came to visit me and put me in check. She prayed and anointed me and gave me a real good understanding of who God was and what was needed. She insisted that the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ was most powerful and no other god was more powerful. After burning all occult books in my possession, my new path was a new road to freedom in Christ Jesus. Satanic forces assailed, but the power and grace of God protected me.

My tour was completed and it was time to head home; but a stop in Miami to visit the missionary who had prayed for me in Haiti was in order. She comforted me and assured me that the Lord would never leave nor forsake me and that my trespasses were all forgiven. God heard our prayers.

God allowed me to adopt a daughter and my son was born healthy. To fulfill my promises to God, a comprehensive study of the word and person of God was begun. Still trying to get my spiritual life in order, a trip to Lakeland, Florida, to a meeting held by Kenneth Hagen was a necessity for me. He began his teaching each day and night with the text Mark 11:23-24. There were two ladies at the meeting who felt led to pray for me. They took me in a room and prayed and cast out demonic spirits. Every unclean spirit that came to mind was renounced which left me refreshed and feeling renewed.

It was not long after that that test and trials began to abound. As soon as I settled down with a house and job, prosecution began for events in Haiti. After an arduous trial, conviction and appeal, it happened that a minimum of eighteen months would be spent in a correctional facility. But God never failed me; he took care of me and protected me.

One day walking up some stairs and praying for early release, God said to me very clearly: “You asked for my justice and you got it.” From that day forward there was no more bothering God about leaving but made myself a willing vessel to be used on the inside. From that day forward, my prayers were always for mercy, grace and favor.

It happened that the opportunity availed itself to become a part of Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship program and to go for a week’s session outside of the institution. We were able to minister to others at the churches we visited. God purposed (or used) this series of what could be considered as unfortunate events in my life to be the foundation of my present day life’s ministry.

Adult Years

Upon being paroled, work was made available so that my reentry requirements could be satisfied then go on home to Georgia to reunite with my family. After visiting different churches in town, it behooved me, under the inspiration of God, to return to the church of my youth, Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, and work with the Sunday school. With several ladies, we formed a prayer group which met once a week at one of our houses or at the home of the sick and or shut-in. We prayed; people were healed and delivered; and financial miracles took place.

Finding work while waiting for recertification was difficult because it appeared “overqualified” was the response for every job opening there was. Therefore, it was my honor to serve as janitor at the church for a stipend of \$50 per week but I made my way by opening a reading and math academy, starting a Travel Agency which did tours and cruises, and by working as a substitute teacher in a nearby town. In the meantime, a

process was undertaken with the State Ethics Department, and after my parole ended, privilege would be given for state teaching certification. In addition to my own children, God sent my nephew's two-pound preemie for me to keep for a season. At the same time three of another nephew's children were put in my care. The Lord blessed to ensure they did not have to be turned away, and we were never destitute.

My daughter graduated high school and went off to college in 1987. My mother had a stroke in 1988. In that same year, the school board hired me as a full-time teacher. With no down payment, we were able to buy a house so we could be close to my mother. We took turns staying with and caring for mother after the stroke.

McKinley Shorter became my spouse in 1989. My son graduated from high school in 1993 and left for college. Our lives were totally immersed in the ministry of eldercare from 1988 to 1998 with my mother, then from 1998 to 2000 with my mother-in-law. My great nephew came back for a few years, then we had another young boy who became part of our family for a few years. There came a realization that God had given me a ministry of caring, and that we must perform it to the best of our ability.

Becoming a member of Greater Mt. Zion AME Church in Waycross opened another phase in my life. The teacher of the Adult Sunday School Class requested that I replace her and died shortly after. It was all so surreal that they dared not disobey her wish. After joining Greater Mt. Zion, my service was as junior steward, steward, stewardess, vice president of the missionary society, district superintendent of the Sunday school, and also as a licensed exhorter.

Just as the time seemed right for me in ministry, my health began to fail. Several surgeries were necessary including a bypass. It was at that time the voice of the Lord

informed me that I would not die but live and declare the work of the Lord (Psalm 118:17). The Lord prepared me by allowing me to frequent Faith Outreach Ministries, a local non-denominational church that operated in all the gifts of the spirit. I served on its board of directors at its inception and was mentored by the pastor. Determined to study and do what God would allow me to do daily for the uplifting of his kingdom, when the time was right, the pastor of Greater Mt Zion AME presented me to the Georgia Conference of the AME Church for admission to the Board of Examiners on the local tract of the ministry because of my age. At this writing my required years of study under the Board of Examiners have been completed and the ordinations of local deacon and local elder have been administered and a church has been placed in my charge. My thought for future ministry focuses on teaching and on making disciples for Christ and working with persons returning to society after incarceration. It is my deepest desire to declare the Word of the Lord and demonstrate His love and power. I believe God.

Contextual Analysis

The contextual analysis of Bethel St-Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church, Waycross, Georgia (Ware County) includes a brief history of the church. It takes into account the makeup of the congregation and the faith affirmation. Included also is an examination of the demographics and the social dynamics.

Bethel-St. Luke, as its name suggests, came about by combining two existing churches. St. Luke was first named Wolf Chapel AME Church. The members of Wolf Chapel purchased the land and completed the first structure on October 3, 1911. The church built the current structure in 1930 and changed the name to St. Luke AME

Church. St. Luke was very active in facilitating social development and addressing the spiritual needs of the Branch and Hazard Hill communities. For many years, the church flourished. However, as the dynamics of the town changed, most families cut ties to these slowly dying communities. The membership was not able to sustain the growth needed for a church to continue to function on a high level. Obligations and responsibilities became too difficult for the small congregation to handle. Over the years, the church structure became dilapidated and unsafe to the point where service could not be held and funds to repair or rebuild were not available. In 2012, the church was given the opportunity to merge with a sister church, Bethel AME Church.

Little Bethel AME Church began with the purchase of a small twenty-foot-wide section of land on which to hold service on January 7, 1924. On August 2, 1926 the members purchased additional land to build a structure. At this time, the original structure was built. The church changed its name to New Bethel AME in 1940. The original structure was removed and the current structure built, and the church became known as Bethel AME Church. For many years, Bethel AME Church was the cornerstone of the spiritual needs of the communities known as Old Nine and Tebeauville. Many African American families and church congregations of Ware County have ties to this church.

The Old Nine and Tebeauville communities are two of the original communities of Waycross and have some of its oldest homes and buildings. These areas were established in 1874. As a result of the creation of the current building codes, family living requirements and business shifts, many of the buildings in these areas became unsuitable for habitation and the lot sizes did not meet the new building codes. This change along

with many others in the area left Bethel AME Church with one member who for many years held tenaciously to her faith and belief that God would not let the doors to this church close. This one member, Joyce Berry Sams, has been the voice, symbol and driving force of this church. That one member held all of the offices and positions in the church except that of pastor. A pastor was assigned each year by the bishop. For eighteen years, from 1994 to 2012, there was one member, and for many years prior to that, there were just two. The remaining member kept the church open by holding special meetings to raise funds to keep the utilities paid and contribute to the connectional budget and assessments as required when possible. She was totally in control of the church and its finances or lack thereof and the president of all the boards. It had been the practice of the previous pastors to transport the one member to and from church and to take her to any church functions in or out of town at the pastor's own expense.

In October 2011, an AME member from St. James AME Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, considered transferring into St. Luke AME Church. However, after attending both church services, assessing both church structures, both churches' real estate options, and city codes, determined that it was better to participate and worship at Bethel AME Church and make plans for future church growth using the property at St. Luke AME Church. After much prayer, and seeking counsel from Pastor Charlene Carter and a district elder, he joined Bethel AME Church in January 2012. This member returned to Waycross because of illness, and by God's grace and mercy, was given more time on earth. This member had over twenty-seven years in construction, leadership, management and organization. This member had a desire to assist in the building of God's Kingdom and wanted to give of his time and talents where they were needed and where they would

be accepted. The one member that was left at Bethel was in the process of praying for someone to come to help carry on the work of the Church when in walked the new member. She believed his appearance to be God's direct answer to her prayer. It was taken as a sign that God was not ready for Bethel to close its doors and that a new era of service was beginning.

In February 2012, Bethel AME Church and St. Luke AME Church were directed to worship together. Bethel's church building was chosen as the structure that held the most promise for revitalization. Most problems were cosmetic and could be repaired. The church was small but structurally sound and functional if repaired. St. Luke AME Church had an active membership of nine and Bethel now had two members. Church services were held on first, second, and third Sundays with no Sunday school or bible study. All offerings were kept by Bethel and the tithes from each church given to the tithing member's church. Each church maintained its own autonomy and identity. The St. Luke congregation expected help from the district elder and the connectional church to repair the building so that they could return to their own place of worship. They were highly disappointed that no help was forthcoming.

On April 1, 2012, Pastor Carter made the announcement that the district elder had officially merged the two churches into one: Bethel-St. Luke AME Church. The merged churches had long histories: Bethel with eighty-eight years of service and St. Luke with 101 years of service. Each church had its own traditions and special times set for celebrations, anniversaries, family and friend days and other events. However, the population of both churches aged out; children moved away; and members moved on to other churches that offered functioning ministries. On April 8, 2013, one member

accepted and moved membership to the newly merged Bethel-St. Luke Church making the new start to a refreshed ministry atmosphere.

In August 2012, Reverend Carolyn K. Shorter was appointed by the elder to supply at Bethel-St Luke Church, a church that would comfortably seat approximately fifty-five persons. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church were the smallest of four AME churches in the city of Waycross and had proudly served their communities. They were on different sides of town, but much of the time they were shepherded by the same pastor and frequently fellowshiped one with the other. Bethel held services on first and third Sundays and St. Luke on second and fourth Sundays.

These small churches were basically used as stepping stones for new pastors to practice and get experience. In fact the mother of the church who has been a member at Bethel for over sixty years, often states that she has trained many pastors. It was understood also that the church was also the place where preachers were sent who had not maintained a good rapport with the governing body or who had failed to meet their financial obligations to the connectional church. Some of the previous pastors lived up to one hundred miles away. They came there only to preach on Sunday morning and had little or no connection with the community. Very little money was raised for the upkeep of the church. The pastors who came were basically compensated from their own contributions.

Totally unexpected was the appointment of a new pastor at Bethel later in the conference year who arrived on the first Sunday in August 2012. Only the two members from Bethel came that Sunday. Many members of St. Luke vowed not to participate in

the merger. One member from St. Luke came the second Sunday which was the regular St. Luke Sunday. In the end, there were two members from St. Luke that decided to remain with the newly merged church. The membership of Bethel-St Luke then became a working team of four: three females ages all over seventy years old and one male in his middle forties. Fifty percent of the members are resistant to any type of change. One member has not yet been to the church. Preparing the congregation for exponential growth by practicing caring and love for one another was challenging for the new pastor. It was important not to linger on the past but to look forward to new opportunities to serve. The church was encouraged to embrace the spirit of the great commission to spread the gospel and operate outside the walls of the Church.

Congregation

At this writing, the membership of Bethel-St. Luke is seven: five adults and two youths. In addition, we now have about ten to fifteen others in regular attendance including young adults and children. The four original team members are homeowners and retirees on disability. The members would all consider themselves as adhering to middle-class values and social graces. With the ravages of the depression and inflation, our members would range from upper-lower to middle on the economic scale. Nobody at this point is begging for bread. We have one military veteran.

While considering the needs of the congregation, I came to the realization that of the older members, one has dialysis three times per week, one has crippling rheumatoid arthritis, one has had a stroke and is on oxygen, one is recovering from cancer, and one of

the teenagers that recently joined is bi-polar. The Lord impressed upon me the need to have some services that would be focused on healing.

The leadership roles in this small church require that people fill in when they can and wherever they can. The role of the clergy is dictated by the Book of Discipline of the church. The members have elected to work as a team for the building of the kingdom. Some people feel they are being pushed into changing and that things are moving too quickly while others embrace the challenges. All actions are now discussed thoroughly in an official church meeting and approved by a proper vote and recorded in the official minutes of the church. We were not able to find any official minutes from either of the merged churches. Most frustrations and misunderstandings that have occurred during the meetings have been because some members have hearing impairments. We use the microphone for meetings to make sure everybody hears clearly before a vote is taken.

Bethel-St. Luke sees its mission as the same as the overall mission of the AME Church. "It is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people, to seek out and save the lost, and to serve the needy. Its stated purpose is to make available to anyone God's biblical principles, to spread the liberating gospel of Christ, and to provide continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people. The objective of the AME Church on all levels is to train members in Christian discipleship and leadership".¹

¹ Jeffrey N Leath, ed., *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2012), 13

Demographics

Bethel-St. Luke AME Church is located in the Old Nine section of Waycross, Georgia. The city had a population of 14,649 at the 2010 census. The city is 11.71 square miles and has 1,250.7 persons per square miles. The demographics of the city are as follows: 55.1% black (8,071.59 persons) and 40.7% white (5,962.14 persons). Hispanics make up 3% and Asians and others make up 2%. Persons under the age of five make up 8.3%. Persons less than eighteen years old make up 26% of the population while persons over sixty-five make up 17.5%. Males make up 45.1% of the population and females make up 54.9%. The per capita income was \$16,221. The median household income was \$24,779. Persons below the poverty level make up 32.7% of the city's population (4,790.2). The city reported that unemployment in August 2012 was 11.6%.²

The total housing units are 7,519 of which 6,083 are occupied. The home ownership rate between 2009 and 2013 was 52.7%. There are 1,374 commercial units in Waycross. Black owned firms total about 10.5%. Most companies are small with few employees.³ The hospital, the school system and the railroad are the largest employers. The healthcare industry is viable and expanding. The Mayo Clinic has taken over the regional hospital. There are four large nursing homes and numerous personal care homes. The Chamber of Commerce promotes the city as being a retirement area to attract people who might have retired in Florida before the recent increase in hurricane activity. Therefore, there has been very little growth in industry resulting in high unemployment.

² US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts - Waycross, Georgia," accessed September 4, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/1380956.html>.

³ Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 Demographic Profile Data, accessed September 4, 2015, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

There are minimum wage jobs in the fast food and the restaurant industries. The county prospers from the cottage industries that sprang up as people fled higher taxes in the city. City property owners shoulder a higher tax burden. The black children who leave home and go to college rarely return to live in Waycross because of lack of employment opportunity.

The crime index for Waycross is 485 compared to the U.S. average of 319.1 (higher numbers indicate more crime). In 2011, the following crimes were reported: 1 murder, 3 rapes, 36 robberies, 44 assaults, 173 burglaries, 942 thefts, 31 auto thefts, and 2 arsons. Fulltime law enforcement officers in 2011 including police officers were sixty-seven. There were 3.91 officers per 1,000 residents.⁴

Conclusion

The information found in this study lets us know that as a church we are on the edge of a new frontier. The old ways no longer serve the best interest of the church. They have brought about diminished membership and a feeling that the church holds itself above the interest of the people it is supposed to serve. It is our duty to shift the emphasis from church tradition to the truth of the Gospel with a focus on the scripture in John 12:32: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (NRSV).”

⁴ Crime rate in Waycross (GA): murders, rapes, robberies, assaults, burglaries, thefts, auto thefts, arson, law enforcement employers, police officers, crime map, accessed September 4, 2015, <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Waycross.Georgia.html>.

Where Passion and Context Meet Reality

Bethel-St. Luke is a small church with an aged congregation and limited resources. It became clear that Bethel- St. Luke, though small in number, could do important work. While pondering what project would be developed in my present context, I was led to examine a context for all of Ware County (Waycross). One of my passions has always been to be involved in prison ministry. My thoughts were to minister to individuals subsequent to their release from incarceration. I was well aware of the fact that there were groups who held church services in jails and prisons, However, I saw the necessity to work with returning citizens, because the majority of them are released back into the society with no support system.

Many ex-offenders have problems with addiction that were not addressed prior to going to prison nor afterwards. A large percentage of ex-offenders have mental health issues that have not been treated. In addition, many have very little education and most have no skills. Furthermore, many of them are labeled as felons that prevent them from getting jobs. Parolees and probationers are unable to comply with the many severe state-imposed restrictions which have an emphasis on enforcement of technical violations rather than help with employment and treatment.⁵ Pat Nolan, in *When Prisoners Return*, calls on churches to “provide or link ex-offenders with resources to help them adjust to their new role.”⁶

⁵ Anthony C. Thompson, *Releasing Prisoners, Redeeming Communities: Reentry, Race and Politics* (New York, NY: University Press, 2008), 140.

⁶ Pat Nolan, *When Prisoners Return* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2004), 1.

In light of these realities, I consulted with the church about initiating a county wide ministry of reentry. The biblical foundations for this project are Jeremiah 31:1-6 in the Old Testament and Philemon verses 10-11 in the New Testament. These passages of scripture speak to the restoration and renewal of people who have offended God and to the restoration and renewal of a person who was out of fellowship with his fellowman. They speak to love and forgiveness which is an indication of how we should treat others who have offended. Therefore, along with the church, I proposed to initiate a model of ministry entitled: “A Collaborative Model for the Restoration and Renewal of Ex-offenders Returning to Society.” This model offers a means for small congregations to be effective.

It should take about a month to prepare the minds of the members of the congregation through sermons on love and forgiveness and providing a safe sanctuary. Training sessions on how to work with ex-offenders would be a part of this proposed project. This effort will seek the help of the parole board, the police, and sheriff department as well as suggestions from the congregation.

Expected Results

This research was expected to motivate the congregation at Bethel-St. Luke and the faith community at large to mentor ex-offenders to the end that they could make a successful reentry into the society. It was expected that members of the community would show concern for the plight of ex-offenders and the rate of recidivism. Moreover, it was expected that others would realize the value of the faith community’s commitment to those in need. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me

something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:35-36).

It is my belief that God has brought me to this time and place to provide a beacon of hope to guide those searching for truth to the true and living God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob. Our teaching would express the love of God and our adoption through the shed blood of Jesus into his kingdom.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The biblical foundation scriptures for this project, “A Collaborative Model for the Restoration and Renewal of Ex-offenders Returning to Society,” are Jeremiah 31:1-6 and Philemon 10-11. They were chosen because they exemplified that a return from bondage and despair is possible. They emphasize the compassion of God toward people whose lives have not been exemplary. As the prophet Jeremiah was given a vision for the nation of Israel, so must the prophetic preaching and praxis of today yield attention to the needs and plight of ex-offenders. As ex-offenders attempt to reunite with the society, whether it be the community, the church, or the family, there must be an understanding that God is a God who forgives and restores.

The broken condition of Israel and that of a previously incarcerated person tend to cover the same sphere of conflict. There is unfaithfulness, disobedience, lack of good judgement and an unwillingness to mend their ways. However, the connection that is made between the people, the preaching of the prophetic word, and God, reveals that a divine message of hope can start a person or group on the road to restoration.

The extent to which a person is able to embrace an ex-offender with open arms is largely a matter of trust in God. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr. indicated at a Reentry Forum “that the work of the church is that of a ministry to the ex-offender as opposed to a

prison ministry. The latter is preaching and teaching while in prison and the former deals with the aftercare. Just as God is showing the Israelites what their aftercare will be like, the faith community is to provide the ex-offender with the options to walk in the right path and be willing to provide sustenance along the way.”¹

Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr., in his presentation “The Biblical Foundation for Prison Ministry: A Ministry of Reentry,” indicated that “the bible has a lot to say about welcoming strangers (Dt 10:19; Lev 19:34; Mt 5:43-44; Mt 25:40). Men and women returning from society after prison are looked upon as strangers. As people of faith, we must realize that God shows no partiality, but anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him (Acts 10:34-35).”²

The Apostle Paul’s relationship with Onesimus in the Book of Philemon suggests a deeper association than one would traditionally assume. What rapport could there be that would cause Paul to come to the defense of an ex-offender? Paul, who considered himself a prisoner of Christ, represents Christ and Christianity and set an example for how we should treat fellow Christians. What Paul did for Onesimus, so must the faith community and the church do in particular. Seeing that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, the church should seek to love and embrace the Christian ex-offender and to show love and forgiveness to all.

The teaching of Jesus would suggest that an ex-offender is not to be left to him or herself to make the transition back to society alone, but that those around him that are strong in faith would build him up (Rom 15:1). This project seeks to show that there is

¹ Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., “The Biblical Foundations of Prison Ministry: A Ministry of Reentry,” (paper presented at Forum on Reentry, April 25, 2015, Waycross, Georgia).

² Cummings, “The Biblical Foundations.”

biblical foundation for the church to become involved in the mission of ministry to ex-offenders. The Old Testament scripture, Jeremiah 31:1-6 and the New Testament scripture, Philemon 10-11 focused on the forgiveness, restoration and renewal of a nation that had strayed from the path and purpose that God had set forth for them. They speak to social conditions and the work of divine grace.

Old Testament Biblical Foundation: Jeremiah 31:1-6

The never-ending love of God for His people is displayed in his desire to restore fellowship with the nation of Israel as a whole. It is because of that overwhelming connection that YHWH offers renewed hope for a future where the nation would experience the fullness of the love of God. God has demonstrated his love in the past and declares that his love continues forever. The following passage, Jeremiah 31:1-6, exposes the past and future hope of Israel:

^{1a}At that time, says the LORD,
^bI will be the God of all the families of Israel,
^cand they shall be my people.
^{2a}Thus says the LORD:
^bThe people who survived the sword
^cfound grace in the wilderness;
^dwhen Israel sought for rest,
^{3a} the LORD appeared to him from far away
^bI have loved you with an everlasting love;
^ctherefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.
^{4a}Again I will build you, and you shall be built,
^bO virgin Israel!
^cAgain you shall take your tambourines,
^dand go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.
^{5a}Again you shall plant vineyards
^bon the mountains of Samaria;
^cthe planters shall plant,
^dand shall enjoy the fruit.

^{6a}For there shall be a day when sentinels will call
^bin the hill country of Ephraim:
^c“Come, let us go up to Zion,
^dto the LORD our God.” (NRSV)

In this paper, I will analyze Jeremiah 31:1-6 in light of YHWH's promise to restore Israel.

Jeremiah is labeled a prophetic book and follows a traditional prophetic convention. Stuart Weeks speaks of the prophetic narrative as a grouping that creates boundaries. It is difficult to identify structure, stylistic, or thematic elements which unite all works and distinguish them from others. One should avoid the tendency to place all ancient literature in the genre of speeches.³

The poetic material in the Book of Jeremiah is interspersed with prose consisting largely of oracles in which the prophet functions as God's messenger speaking in the name of God. In chapters 1-25, the variety of themes covers the nation's infidelity, the call for repentance and an attack on the religious and political establishment. In these passages we find a personal exposé on the prophet's experiences. Chapters 30-33 have been called the book of consolation consisting of oracles. The basic theme of these oracles is that of hope beyond natural disaster. In chapter 46-51, the oracles are against the nations that threaten the existence of Israel. Jeremiah contains biographical narratives that recount the life of the prophet. These narratives are found in chapters 26-29, 32, and 34-44 and they provide historical dating. The prose passages occur throughout the book. They occur in the form of sermons or speeches. They are called Deuteronomic (or

³ Stuart Weeks, "Jeremiah as a Prophetic Book" in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Hans Barstad and Richard G. Kratz (Berlin DE: Walter de Gruyter, 2009) 265-271.

Deuteronomistic) because they reflect the style, language and thought of the Book of Deuteronomy. In Jeremiah 31:1-6 the influence of the prophet Hosea is marked. The language and thought of other passages are linked to Isaiah.⁴

The literary forms used in this passage of Jeremiah are oracles and deuteronomic speeches. The oracles are poetic utterance given as revelation from YHWH usually prefaced and concluded or are interlaid with “YHWH says.” The deuteronomic style speeches are usually introduced by the “message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord”⁵

Literary devices used in the passage Jeremiah 31:1-6 were repetition and parallelisms. Repetition is prominent with the word ‘again’ to begin lines 4a, 4c, and 5a. There is indication that these acts were previously performed. However, through the grace of God, the Israelites would be allowed to do these thing once more.⁶

Again I will build you . . .
 Again you shall take . . .
 Again you shall plant . . .

In verse four, there is static parallelism.⁷ “Again, I will build you, and you shall be built . . .” The clauses repeat essentially the same elements. The second clause refers back to the first in order to create a unit.⁸

⁴ Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 345-346.

⁵ Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Ronald Murphy, *The New Jerome Bible Handbook* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 66, 95.

⁶ Barkley M. Newman, Jr. and Phillip C. Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, UBS Handbook Series, (New York, NY: United Bible Societies), 2003.

⁷ Newman and Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, 13.

⁸ Newman and Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, 13-14.

In the following verse, lines one and three are related to each other and display static or synonymous parallelism with the word plant:

Again you shall plant vineyards
on the mountains of Samaria,
The planters shall plant
and shall enjoy the fruit.

Similarly the association of 'vineyard' and 'fruit' create a unit. The pronoun 'you' is replaced by 'planters' but maintain the same static parallelism.⁹

Dynamic parallelism occurs in line 3b and 3c. The term 'everlasting love' is further intensified by 'continuing faithfulness.'¹⁰

I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

During the years of Jeremiah's prophecy, there were two major influential events in the history of Judah. One was the religious reform of Josiah in 622 BCE, and the second was the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 587 BCE. Between 597 BCE and 587 BCE, many went into exile. Jeremiah's proclamation of the word began around the time of the decline of Assyria and the following conflict between Babylon and Egypt. The reduction in Assyrian control provided Josiah the opportunity to remove the Assyrian religious practice that had become part of the religious practices at Jerusalem. Josiah was able to take control of the Assyrian territory that was once the northern kingdom and eliminate non-Yahwistic cults and practices.¹¹

⁹ Newman and Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, 13-14.

¹⁰ Newman and Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, 13-14.

¹¹ Patrick D. Miller, "The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *New Interpreter's Bible* 12 Vols., ed. Leander Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 555-556.

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin and was of the priestly clan of Abiathar. This clan had lost its privileges to serve in the temple centuries earlier when King Solomon chose to consolidate his power by having those who had supported his brother Adonijah's claim to the throne either killed or exiled. Therefore, Jeremiah's clan had been relegated to sites that were eventually shut down. It is suggested that Jeremiah may have preferred the old tribal ways and values and was opposed to the policies that Solomon had put in place. It is also suggested by the text, Jeremiah 25:3, that Jeremiah started his ministry in 627 BCE and prophesied until after the deportation in 586 BCE and the departure of a large group of Judeans to Egypt. Jeremiah and his scribal colleague Baruch were taken hostage to Egypt.¹²

The opening verse, Jeremiah 31:1a, immediately places the action to follow at a specific time, but one that remained unknown to the people of that time. The time was in the distance as pointed out by the use of the demonstrative pronoun "that" in reference to as "the latter days" in 30:24d.¹³ Jeremiah previously focused on the anger of the Lord against those who oppressed Israel. God would not cease his anger until his purposes were accomplished. Jeremiah focused on the judgment and punishment of Israel as a nation and the destruction of their enemies and oppressors.

The restoration of Judah and Israel is announced in Jeremiah 31:1. It introduces the oracles that pronounce the restoration of hope for Israel and the love that the Lord has

¹² Michael D Coogan, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1054.

¹³ F. B. Huey, "Jeremiah, Lamentation," in *The New American Commentary*, vol.16 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 269-270.

declared for His people.¹⁴ Through Jeremiah, God communicates in a personal manner to both groups of exiles offering them a future where the grace, love and faithfulness of the Lord abound. The wilderness represents a place of God's punishment and the loss of the covenant protection and fellowship. It is in that wilderness that they would learn that God would renew the covenant with them.¹⁵

Jeremiah 31:1-6 reports in detail how the restoration would happen. The passages relate the following:

Those fleeing the sword found grace in the wilderness, unexpected,
and en route home they learned again, afresh of God's ongoing love.
Addressing Lady Zion, the speaker promises her rebuilding and replanting, vows
that she will dance and her men will plant and successfully guard vineyards and
enjoy their produce. Again, what has been devastated, abandoned, and wept over
will be repopulated, replanted and celebrated within.¹⁶

The prophet Jeremiah declares the information that follows to be the words of YHWH. Line 31:1b announces that in the future, YHWH would be the true God. Use of the definite article refers to a specific God and not a panorama of deities. The theology of Jeremiah's prophecies speaks to exclusive monotheism. Jeremiah projects YHWH as the supreme, exclusive god who controls the whole cosmos.¹⁷ Judgment came to Israel because of the multiplicity of Gods they had begun to serve (Jer 1:16) as a result of their associations with the people living in the land. The use of "all the families of Israel"

¹⁴ Miller, "The Book of Jeremiah," 809.

¹⁵ Miller, "The Book of Jeremiah," 809.

¹⁶ Barbara Green, *Jeremiah and God's Plans of Well-being* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 161.

¹⁷ Dan Merkur, "Reading the Prophecies of Jeremiah through a Psychoanalytic Lens" in *Psychology and the Bible: A new way to Read the Scriptures* vol. 2. eds. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Prager Publishers, 2004), 177.

(31:1b), focuses attention on all the tribes and clans of the Israelites. This would include all who were part of the original covenant: the northern or southern kingdoms.¹⁸ Exiles from the Northern Kingdom would be reunited with Judah and allowed to enjoy a renewed relationship with God.¹⁹

In 31:1c, YHWH announces the future possession of a nation. We might term this action as the repossession because they were in times past considered a covenant people. The use of the phrase “my people,” resonates aggressive ownership.²⁰

The announcing of speaker (line 2a) is done in a much more formal way with the use of the adverb “thus.” F. B. Huey noted that the language used in verse 2 could refer to the Exodus from Egypt and the provision that God made for the Israelites in the wilderness or it could refer to the future time when the Israelites would return from exile. The term “survived the sword”(line 31:2b) could mean the remnant left after the stay in the desert or more likely those that survived the conquest of the Assyrians and the Babylonians.²¹

The survivors found “grace in the wilderness.” Those that trusted in God were told that even though they were being punished, that they should go forward and build houses and raise families and trust God to deliver them in due time. It indicated that whatever situation God orchestrates, he would protect his own. The time of the exile

¹⁸ Newman and Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah*, 626.

¹⁹ Robert Chisholm. “The Major Prophets” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publisher, 1998), 303.

²⁰ Carl Wilhelm, Edward Nægelsbach and Samuel Ralph Asborey. *A Commentary of the Holy Scriptures: Jeremiah*. (Bellingham, WA Logos Bible Software, 2008), 263.

²¹ Huey, “Jeremiah, Lamentation,” 269-270.

could be rendered as a time of reflection. Line 31:2c was written in the past tense:

“survived/found” grace and sought rest. The line 31:3a continues the thought from verse 2:²²

31:2c when Israel sought for rest,
31:3a the Lord appeared to him for far away.

These lines serve as a reminder of the time of the Lord’s visitation to the nation of Israel. The masculine form used refers to Israel/Jacob collectively. Though Israel had moved spiritually away from God, God had not stopped caring for Israel. In fact when God saw that they had need of rest, he came to them and comforted them with reassurance of his love and faithfulness. In lines, 31:3b and c, the pronouncement is made in the present perfect which indicates an action that took place at a point in the past and continues in the present: I have loved/ I have continued. The words “everlasting” and “faithfulness” imply enduring and maintaining a thing for a very long while. God loved Israel even when he chastised them by allowing their enemies to overwhelm them and subdue them.

Louis Stulman indicated that the language of 31:2-3 refers to that time in the past when YHWH delivered Israel from Egypt and took care of them in the wilderness. YHWH’s appearance from far away could indicate Mt. Sinai. The references from the past uses traditional language to allude to the calamity perpetrated by the Babylonians and the promise of their return from exile to their land.²³

Line 31:4a moves us to concentrate on a promise of the future. “I will build demonstrated that God will start a new thing with them.” He uses “will build” and not

²² Huey, “Jeremiah, Lamentation,” 269-270

²³ Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 266.

rebuild, which indicates that the old charges will not be held against them. The Lord referred to Israel as “virgin.” The term “virgin” is usually reserved for young women but in this case is being used metaphorically to describe a nation.²⁴ Lines 4b and c encourage celebration in the future with music and dancing which is in opposition to the lack of rejoicing during the exile.²⁵

Jeremiah 31:5 continues in the future tense. The planting of vineyards suggests the possibility of being at a place for a long time. The first three years after planting, they would not be able to eat the fruit. In the fourth year the fruit is not eaten, but is dedicated to the Lord. In the fifth year the fruit could be eaten by the common people and was not restricted to holy use. This verse suggests that the inhabitants of the land will be able to enjoy the fruit of their labor. The mention of Samaria recalls the ten tribes of the northern kingdom.²⁶

Jeremiah 31:6 still looks to a future time when the sentinels (watchmen) will make the call to the ten tribes to go to Jerusalem. They will return to God and the place of worship previously rejected by them. Normally, the sentinel is in place to sound the alarm and warn the population that an enemy is approaching. He is also the one to announce the good news.²⁷

²⁴ Walter A Elwell, and Barry Bertzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 2124.

²⁵ Temper Longman, III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 204.

²⁶ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research System, 1997).

²⁷ Jamison, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*.

Zion (Jerusalem) is the primary destination, goal of the journey of Israel. The city is the “virgin” of God. The watchmen cry for the return to the city. The prophet chose the words “betalal yisrael,” Virgin of Israel, to emphasize its position as capital of the northern and southern kingdoms. The city is addressed as “betula” using feminine vocabulary which gives the idea of being protected. Since a betula (virgin) lives with their father and under his protection, it gives the idea of a city under the protection of God.²⁸

At first glance, the words of this prophecy appear to be directed only to the northern kingdom which had separated itself and set up other worship places and had Samaria as its capital. The reading offers an image of a father longing to be united with a long lost child. It sets up an image of a tearful mother crying for the return of a wayward daughter that she loves with all her heart. It can even be seen as an appeal to the Church to return to its true place.

The southern kingdom (Judah) is in no position to condemn those of the northern kingdom at this time because they have been taken into captivity to Babylon as a result of disobedience to YHWH. They had allowed themselves to be influenced by the religious practices of the people of the land that YHWH had warned them about. YHWH persisted in that as covenant people they must make Him the only object of worship.

The promise was that if they survived the captivity, the exile, God had new plans for them. They had chosen not to be faithful to their God; now they were thrust into the belly of the perpetrators of the evil that they so longed to imitate. They had brought in the

²⁸ John J. Schmitt, “The virgin of Israel: Referent and use of the phrase in Amos and Jeremiah,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1991) 365, accessed May 2, 2013. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

worship of other gods into the sacred land that YHWH had given them and protected. As captives, they were able to see and feel the whole gamut of living under the tyranny of other kings. They were also able to see their own sacred temple defamed, plundered and destroyed.

Through the prophecy of Jeremiah, YHWH assures the people that even though the judgment of the Lord has come upon them, the same God that they covenanted with and promised to served exclusively would, at an appointed time, rescue them and restore them to right standing with him. Jeremiah's prophecy provided for the people an image of future peace and rest. It evoked thoughts of a time in the future where again they would be in their own land. They would once again enjoy the freedom and prosperity that had been theirs before their leaders turned their backs on YHWH, forsook his teachings, and made him irrelevant to their lives and to the well-being of the nation. Stulman points out that such boundless love and benevolence are not in compliance with the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27-28. YHWH's actions of renewal had little to do with Israel's piety or virtue but with mercy.²⁹

The potency of this prophecy is that it offers hope and a reason for existing. It offers a vision of the future which allows them to keep their identity as a nation among the people with whom they lived. The term restoration brings with it the idea and image of building, renewing and making whole. It brings to mind the building of places and the rebuilding of spiritual foundations. This prophecy describes the building of a nation whose God is the Lord. YHWH is the focus of the prophecy. The children of Israel started with God as their leader, then priest as intermediaries, then judges, and later the

²⁹ Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 267.

kings. The kings, though some were divinely selected, allowed personal imperfections to taint their relationship with YHWH and plunge the people into darkness.

It is YHWH who remembers his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who assures that there will always be a remnant of his people. The assurance is given that he will again issue the invitation to all of Israel, to all the tribes, to come to the Lord and occupy their place in the sheepfold and be reconciled with their God.

We can view again the image of the watchmen (sentinels) in the tower or on the wall announcing to all the clans to come home. This is the message permeating the atmosphere. Tell them they will no longer be the outcast or downtrodden; therefore, they should come home. The ever loving God will receive you as if you never left. It appears as the image of the rapture, the second coming of Christ when the dead in Christ shall rise and those that are alive and left will be caught up to meet him in the air.

Dan Merkur, in his article “Reading the Prophecies of Jeremiah through a Psychoanalytical Lens,” posits that Jeremiah’s prophecies could result from states of religious reveries whereby a person might be dreaming that they are dreaming. Instead of concrete imagery the prophet receives verbal ideation. The religious reveries provide opportunity for the subject to see what they consider to be intrapsychic (existing or occurring in the mind) as apperceptions of valid truth through the use of the imagination. Merkur points out that the prophetic words emanated from Jeremiah’s unconscious state and frequently manifested consciously without showing distortions other than forcing them to conform to literary conventions of cultic prophecy.³⁰

³⁰ Merkur, “Reading the Prophecies of Jeremiah,” 176.

In his article, “Means of Revelation in the Book of Jeremiah,” Becking presents the idea of the double author of divine voice being heard through the prophetic voice which identifies revelation with inspiration.³¹ Rather than the offering of a superego that Merkur presents, Becking labels Jeremiah’s prophecy as revelation-through-the word. Jeremiah regularly repeats the phrase “thus says the Lord” to indicate that he speaks on behalf of YHWH.³² In Jeremiah 31:1-6, the communication is mainly verbal and calls to mind images of the exodus of the people from places of exile to an area that was previously their home. It evokes images of peace and contentment. Jeremiah is depicted as consulting with the divine.³³

Conclusion

In conclusion, the revelatory nature of Jeremiah’s prophecy evokes vivid and concrete images of the future. Based on the amount of devastation that had been heaped upon the people of Jerusalem and the fighting that went on in the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, the people needed to hear a word of hope from their God. Though God’s anger had allowed the people to become enslaved and exiled, YHWH, their covenant God, would see them through their trials and tribulation and return them. Not only would the people be returned, but YHWH would have a direct hand in the rebuilding of the nation. The nation which at this time was not only conquered and exiled but was fragmented because of prior grabs for power. It would seem futile that such an emphatic

³¹ Bob Becking, “Means of Revelation in the Book of Jeremiah” in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Hans Barstad and Richard G. Kratz (Berlin DE: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 33.

³² Becking, “Means of Revelation,” 46.

³³ Becking, “Means of Revelation,” 37.

call to the Northern Kingdom would be made since they had already been overrun by the Assyrians. Nonetheless, the prophecy was a clarion call from their covenant God to all his covenant children for restoration and unity.

In the end, there would be stability and a time for merriment. As the nation of Israel needed to hear a word of hope from their God, even though they had been exiled as a result of their actions, it is the hope of ex-offenders to return to a society that would receive them. Albeit, they have gone awry of the societal norms. It is the power of reconciliation that would create a climate of forgiveness and love. Jeremiah spoke of a future whereby the tribes would be restored to the land and a time for merriment would ensue. Ex-offenders will eventually return; however, their restoration will depend on their faith and commitment to God and to the values of the society.

New Testament Foundation

Introduction

The epistle to Philemon was written to a specifically named group of people: Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus, as well as the church which was held in Philemon's house. The occasion for this letter was to appeal to the humanity, Christianity and moral temperature of Philemon and the local church vis-à-vis the destination and disposition of his slave Onesimus whom Paul had shepherded. Although this epistle was considered by some to be a personal letter, there were wider ramifications which would involve the transformation of the whole church community. The following passage, Philemon verses 10-11, was an entreaty for unmerited favor:

^{10a}I am appealing to you for my child Onesimus,
^b whose father I have become during my imprisonment.

^{1a} Formerly he was useless to you,
^b but now is indeed useful both to you and to me.

New Testament Foundation

In this paper, I will analyze verses 10-11 of the epistle to Philemon in light of Paul's appeal to Philemon and to the church on behalf of Onesimus for reconciliation and restoration. Such reconciliation and restoration would not be based on legal compliances. They would be implanted with love and mercy.

The word reconciliation, though not found in the epistle to Philemon, is the central theme of the epistle. The narrative of this letter recognizably implicates that there was a rift of great magnitude in the relationship between Philemon and his slave Onesimus who absented without permission. Turner describes this letter as being "the most exquisite short piece ever written in any attempt to resolve such concern." Paul probes delicately into the area of reconciliation and restoration after a broken interpersonal relationship.³⁴

This letter is written in Paul's epistolary style. It uses the epistolary prescript (vv. 1-3) and thanksgiving (vv. 4-7), the epistolary body (vv. 8-22), the epistolary closing and greeting from co-workers (vv. 23-24), and a final benediction (v. 25).³⁵ It is written in prose. The author also uses persuasive rhetoric. There is triangularity with Paul,

³⁴ Max Turner, "Human Reconciliation in the New Testament with Special Reference to Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians," *European Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (April 2007): 37-39, accessed March 10, 2015, *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCOhost.

³⁵ Coogan, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 2100.

Onesimus and Philemon. Paul uses family metaphors: father/son, Paul/Christ, and master/slave. The theme perceived is the flow of love to a redeemed man reflecting God's love and forgiveness.

The letter to Philemon is held by most biblical scholars to be written by Paul. It is the shortest of the Pauline letters and its integrity has been preserved in the twelve major uncial manuscripts. This letter is linked by church tradition to the major catalogs of the New Testament canon from early centuries. These include the late second century Muratorian Fragment and Bishop Athanasius' thirty-ninth Festal Letter to his clergy in 367 CE.³⁶

The intended recipients of this letter were Philemon (the friend and co-worker), Apphia (our sister), Archippus (our fellow soldier) and the church (in Philemon's house). Robert Black wrote that Apphia may have been the wife of Philemon and would have had oversight over the household slaves. Paul would have been aware that any decision made concerning Onesimus would have affected her management of the house. Black wrote also that Archippus may have been their son.³⁷ Archippus was also mentioned in Col 4:17 and was a leader in the community and possibly a pastor.³⁸

Early congregations met in homes rather than buildings set aside for worship. It was Paul's strategy to establish a base of operation in the homes of his converts. The atriums in Roman houses at the time could conceivably accommodate upwards to fifty

³⁶Cain Hope Felder, "The Letter to Philemon: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" in, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. XI, ed. Leander E. Keck, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 883.

³⁷ R. Black and R. McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: A commentary for bible students*. (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 267.

³⁸ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 273.

persons. The house churches of the first century believers were known for their hospitality.³⁹

Philemon 10-11

Philemon was considered to be a wealthy man who had been led to Christ by Paul. He lived in the town of Colossae in the highlands of Phrygia. It is very probable that he received Christ during Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 2:31). Paul reveals that he was a fellow worker who was a faithful witness of Christ. The fact that he had slave help was not uncommon for the times.⁴⁰

The time of the writing is placed around 61 CE. That is to say that Paul was imprisoned in Rome at the time of the writing. It is held that Rome would be the most likely place for the composition of this letter since Philemon was overseer of the Lycus Valley house churches at Colossae in Asia Minor. It would also seem that a runaway slave would have sought refuge in Rome rather than stay close to the place from which he was fleeing.⁴¹ Paul, having liberty in prison to receive a fugitive from Asia Minor, would fit the practice in Rome of allowing house arrest.⁴²

It is traditionally held that the letter to Philemon was written between A.D. 59 and 62 from Rome. However, some scholars believe this letter could have been written in advance of the letter to the Colossians and sent from Ephesus A.D. 55 or 56. Ephesus had

³⁹ Lazarus Wentz, "Philemon," Edited by John D Barry and Lazarus Wentz. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software 2012).

⁴⁰ James E. Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God*. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008) 2487.

⁴¹ Felder, "The Letter to Philemon," 884.

⁴² Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer*, 2487.

a large population of slaves and it was possible that Onesimus could find anonymity in large groups of people.⁴³

Black located Onesimus as a fugitive slave from Philemon's household. It is intimated that Onesimus stole from his master and fled to Rome. This vast metropolis would be another place where a slave might become anonymous. Black noted that it is not known how Paul and Onesimus came in contact with each other, but what is known is that Paul led Onesimus to a saving knowledge of Christ and that Onesimus became a willing servant.⁴⁴

It is apparent that Paul appreciated the help of Onesimus. Paul was aware that the right thing to do was to send him back to his owner. Paul did so by sending a letter encouraging Philemon to treat the slave with kindness.⁴⁵

Paul precedes his request with compliments and thanks. He impresses upon Philemon the necessity to continue sharing the faith as a means to his own personal growth and development and to continue sharing love and joy and providing encouragement. Paul would hope that these caring and honorable qualities that Philemon exhibited would manifest themselves when dealing with Onesimus' situation.⁴⁶

The necessity of Onesimus being returned to Philemon was not in question. What was being considered was how he would be received. Paul's appeal was subtle and not made on spiritual authority over Philemon as an apostle but rather to his heart. He

⁴³ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 268.

⁴⁴ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 269.

⁴⁵ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 269.

⁴⁶ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 275-276.

appeals on the basis of love and need. Paul's mentioning that he was a prisoner of Christ could have evoked sympathy.⁴⁷

Paul appeals to Philemon's sense of altruism and his benevolent spirit. Paul implies that Philemon would want to be of help to him, the apostle, just as Onesimus helped him while he was in prison. Paul also appeals to Philemon on the basis of friendship. He asks Philemon to trust Onesimus more than a slave. He appeals on the basis of respect as well. Paul does not want to do anything in regards to Philemon's slave without his consent. Paul appeals to Philemon's magnanimity, his great generosity of spirit which would enable him to treat a slave as a brother in the Lord. And at the end, Paul simply asks that he give him some benefit since he was giving "Useful" (Onesimus) back to him.⁴⁸

This letter focuses on "the difference the transforming power of the gospel can make in the lives and relationships of believers, regardless of class or other distinctions." For many centuries, it was held that the Letter to Philemon was simply a personal letter to a friend to restore a runaway slave who was a thief. However, there is nothing in the letter to give credence to the idea that Onesimus was a criminal fugitive. Though the issue of slavery was prominent during this time and slavery was supported by the Roman legal system, Paul's reliance on the force of the gospel to bring about transformation in human relationships as well as reconciliation was at the forefront of his treatise.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 277.

⁴⁸ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 279.

⁴⁹ Felder, "The Letter to Philemon," 885.

Walter Elwell asserts that the situation that developed between Philemon and Onesimus necessitated the special mediation of an advocate. There needed to be an adept defender who could command the respect of Philemon in order to communicate successfully on behalf of Onesimus. Paul used the psychology of commendation.⁵⁰

It is in Philemon verse 10, that the name Onesimus is first mentioned. Paul did not give his name immediately, but prepared the way with affectionate references and favorable, flattering descriptions of him. Paul withholds the name of Onesimus until he had favorably predisposed Philemon to accept his request.

The appeal begins with non-compelling language. The non-use of forceful language clears the way to establish a friendly atmosphere. He starts: “^{10a} I am appealing to you for my child Onesimus,” which intimates a caring, responsive attitude. In verse 10a, Paul makes a request: “I am appealing to you.” The verb, appeal, here means to ask or beseech. It sets forth the main idea of this selection. This is a very strong but not overbearing tone being applied. “I am appealing” is in the present progressive tense which refers to a continuing action.⁵¹ In this sense, it is an ongoing request, not just for this moment but well on into the future. The pronoun ‘you’ (thee in the KJV) is in the accusative singular case⁵² which in modern English, is the same as the dative case and is the indirect object. Its use, in the singular, indicates that Paul’s appeal at this point was

⁵⁰ Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1675.

⁵¹ Richard R. Melick, “Philippians, Colossians, Philemon”, vol. 32 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1991), 360.

⁵² Albert L. Lukaszewski, Mark Dubis, and Ted Blakely, *The Lexham Syntactic Greek New Testament, SBL Edition: Expansions and Annotations* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011), Logos software.

directly to Philemon, but intended to be heard by all.⁵³ Paul's letter addressed to Philemon was an open letter to the converts that made up the church in his house. The open letter would bring to the forefront the spiritual issues important to the whole of the Christian community. It would also place Philemon under the microscope to examine his action based on the brotherly love preached by believers.

Nordling writes that Paul is representing himself as manifesting Christ, and as engaging with "the governing disposition and animus which would have led Philemon and Onesimus to react to the other at that point in time, knowing each other's nature."⁵⁴ We recognize Onesimus as the bearer of this letter to Philemon, but Paul is speaking on his behalf. Nordling places Paul as launching the appeal for Onesimus in Christ. Paul stands behind Onesimus who is a changed person just as Christ stands behind Paul. Philemon, Onesimus and Paul are in a triangular position in which Paul represents Christ at the apex of the triangle. Paul is urging that the response to the letter would be one of love. The two persons who were formally at odds with each other would be for each other since both were "in Christ." As Christ intercedes for sinners, Paul operates as one to convey forgiveness to Philemon and Onesimus as spiritual father to both of them.⁵⁵

As Christ has shown God's grace to Paul and as Christ intercedes on behalf of sinners, Paul presents himself in the letter as one through whom the forgiveness of sin is to be conveyed to Philemon and to Onesimus. Felder suggests that Paul was well aware that his "situation as intercessor was legally defensible because Roman law provided for

⁵³ Felder, "The Letter to Philemon," 897.

⁵⁴ John G. Nordling, "The Gospel in Philemon" in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71 no 1 (Jan 2007), 79.

⁵⁵ Nordling, "The Gospel in Philemon," 80.

cases of advocacy on behalf of runaway slaves who returned to their masters.” He was aware that he had the “right to intercede of behalf of the now converted runaway slave” as the apostle of Christ. It has been suggested that Philemon, not having received previous news from Onesimus, might react negatively to his name even being mentioned. Therefore, it would be to Paul’s advantage to proceed with tact.⁵⁶

By addressing Onesimus as my child, Paul creates a family bond. In Paul’s time, the terms *father* and *son* were applied to a “relationship between a teacher and a student or to an evangelist and a convert.”⁵⁷ The family imagery that Paul uses creates an environment favorable to facilitating his appeal. The family metaphors used here connected language to social reality. Kinship patterns, however, vary according to time and place and words like “child stir up different sentiment in different contexts.”⁵⁸

The preposition ‘for’ indicates that Paul was writing in defense of, in support of, in favor of, on the side of, on behalf of, in the interest of Onesimus. Paul is earnestly entreating Philemon. In the expression ‘my child,’ the ‘my’ is a possessive adjective which indicates ownership. This creates a notion of master/servant or father/son. Paul takes ownership of Onesimus as if he were a member of his family.⁵⁹

The name Onesimus means useful. Paul used the Greek synonym ‘useful’ to say that once Onesimus had become a Christian, he was spiritually living up to his given

⁵⁶Felder, “The Letter to Philemon,” 898.

⁵⁷ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*,” 278.

⁵⁸ Christopher A. Frilingos, 2000. “For my child, Onesimus: Paul and domestic power in Philemon.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 1: 93-94, accessed October 2, 2013, *ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost*.

⁵⁹ Frilingos, “For my child, Onesimus,” 101.

name.⁶⁰ This is a suitable name for a person being tagged as profitable. The name Onesimus means profitable and useful and was a common name for slaves. Paul however makes a clever play on words when he says to Philemon that ‘Useful’ used to be useless to you, but has become truly useful.⁶¹

In verse 10b, Paul continues his discourse: “whose father I have become during my imprisonment.” Nordling posits that “Paul plays father to Onesimus by ‘begetting’ him during his imprisonment and thereby instills in him a desire to be ‘useful’ to his master once again.”⁶² Paul refers to himself as a prisoner of Christ, not as an apostle but as a slave making an appeal on behalf of another slave. Paul was in prison as a part of God’s plan and reveals that believers are bound together to Christ by love.

At issue is the belief that “Christ has satisfied and paid for all of our guilt and without man’s merit, has obtained and won for him forgiveness of sins.” For Paul, “Christ is the central and most crucial character in the human drama;” therefore, everything else is predicated on this understanding. Nordling contends that Paul’s assertions are based on his conviction that the Gospel is prominent and preeminent in the letter to Philemon.⁶³

‘Whose’ is the possessive case of ‘who’ and is used adjectively to modify ‘father’. The use of the word father is able to create a family bond. Father not only refers to a male parent or guardian or provider, but to the leader of an assembly. Paul’s use of the

⁶⁰ Laura L Sanders, 2004. “Equality and a request for the manumission of Onesimus.” *Restoration Quarterly* 46, no. 2: 110, accessed October 2, 2013, *ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost*.

⁶¹ Black and McClung, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 278.

⁶² Nordling, “The Gospel in Philemon,” 79.

⁶³ Nordling, “The Gospel in Philemon,” 71-72.

father/child scenario intimates a familial closeness forged through the faith in the goodness and mercy of Christ. 'I have become' is in the present perfect tense and shows that this activity was a process and did not happen instantaneously. Onesimus had been under the tutelage of Paul for an indefinite period of time. Paul located the action of this verse as being while he was imprisoned, in bonds and restrained.⁶⁴

Philemon verse 11a reads, "Formerly he was useless to you." After mentioning Onesimus' name, Paul immediately declares that a change has taken place in him that would cause him to live up to his name. The adverb 'formerly' represents a time in the past, previously. The adjective 'useless' indicates serving no practical or beneficial purpose. Paul uses a bit of humor to lighten the mood because Onesimus is really in a grave situation.⁶⁵

Philemon verse 11b reads: "but now is indeed useful both to you and to me." The use of 'but now' represents a transition. The transition began the viewing of Onesimus in a different light. The use of the term 'indeed' to modify useful could lead one to presuppose that Onesimus is to move to a higher position than slave which could possibly mean manumission for him. If a slave is led to believe that he might be manumitted, he would be apt to work harder.⁶⁶ Onesimus, being Paul's son in Christ, would then make him be brother with Philemon, and Paul would hope the he would be treated as such.

⁶⁴ Felder, "The Letter to Philemon," 898.

⁶⁵ Felder, "The Letter to Philemon," 898.

⁶⁶ Sanders, "Equality and a request," 113.

According to Sanders, “Paul requests a great amount of love from a slave owner and the church on behalf of a common slave.”⁶⁷ In addition, Paul emphasized that “love to the point of equality is the key to necessary unity of the church.”⁶⁸ Paul continues to put into operation the equality by setting into motion a consensual partnership with not only the person addressed in the epistle but also the whole congregation. The Onesimus /Philemon drama is an example for forgiveness and redemption.⁶⁹ The adjective ‘useful’ leads us to surmise that Paul had benefited from Onesimus’ usefulness during the time he was with him. The term ‘useful,’ indicates that one served a use or purpose especially, a valuable, practical or beneficial one. The designation of ‘useful both to you and me’ hints of Paul’s desire that Onesimus be received as a brother in Christ, with the same courteousness as any other ambassador of Christ.

Nordling focuses on the idea that the same thing that “Christ has done for us with God the Father, the same thing that Paul does also for Onesimus with Philemon. Christ emptied himself of his rights (Phil 2:7) and overcame the father with love and humility, so that the father had to put away his wrath and rights and receive us into favor for the sake of Christ who so earnestly advocated our cause and so heartily takes our part.”⁷⁰

Christ has encountered Philemon in the person of Paul. Paul saw Onesimus as the key to what future relationship the apostle would cultivate between himself, Philemon and the congregation. It is through triangularity and the “taking each other’s part in Christ

⁶⁷ Sanders, “Equality and a request,” 114.

⁶⁸ Sanders, “Equality and a request,” 114.

⁶⁹ Sanders. “Equality and a request,” 114.

⁷⁰ Nordling, “The Gospel in Philemon,” 80.

climaxed by a former runaway slave becoming reconciled to the master were signs of what could by God's grace henceforth be achieved through the gospel."⁷¹

Conclusion

In the epistle of Paul to Philemon the miraculous working of Christ is brought into full view. It paints a picture of a runaway slave who was converted to Christianity and was received into the Kingdom of God. As a result, he was forgiven for his past transgressions. Paul presented this runaway slave as a changed man, one whose service to God and man had been documented by Paul himself. Therefore, it was because of the slave's place in Christ that Paul offered for him to be taken in as a full member of the congregation of believers in Philemon's house.

Reconciliation by God's grace is a major factor in the redemptive plan. For it was Christ who died that we might be reconciled to God the Father and restored to right fellowship with him. It would certainly be a positive picture to see that Christians would follow the example of Christ. This epistle presents a situation for Christians to show themselves as true believers and to act in a manner consistent with the love and forgiveness being taught.

The church must seek to see the good in others and show love to those who may not appear to deserve our love and caring. For the ex-offender, the church must be a place where one can learn to be responsible and develop self-esteem. It should provide a sense of family and community.

⁷¹ Nordling, "The Gospel in Philemon," 81.

Paul provided that sense of community and belonging for Onesimus. The faith community, after having given forgiveness, should then offer teaching to the offender as Paul did for Onesimus. Paul chose to intercede on Onesimus' behalf and plead for mercy and favor for a fellow believer not as an unworthy offender. Paul showed that all have a place in God's grandiose plan for restoration and renewal.

It is important for believers to hold on to the concept that God will restore one spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Looking at growth in these areas is a stepping stone to renewal. A renewed existence through a new life in Christ opens up opportunities for a reality of life not fathomed in one's previous existence. In being renewed, one transforms into a vessel of honor from a vessel of dishonor.

Since Christ loved us so passionately, it was his ultimatum that we extend love and kindness to others. Paul took the risk of evangelizing and harboring a slave. The church must take the risk of being proactive in reaching out to ex-offenders as they readjust their thinking to embody the teachings of Christ.

Verses 10-11 of Philemon show us that there is hope for the offender. That hope is nourished by the desire of the faith community to be the conduit through which God extends his mighty hand poised to restore and renew. Paul illustrates that much can be done to improve on relationships through tact and discernment.

When an ex-offender ponders his plight, let him be met with the guiding light of a mentor who shows stability in Christ. As Paul espoused in Romans 8:38-39 (NRSV), "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is this hope that infuses one’s heart and mind and influences one to see the greater good.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Christianity, since its early history, has been concerned with the plight of prisoners. Christians have advocated for humane treatment and have interceded on behalf of many. The overall involvement of the church included attending to the spiritual and the physical needs of those incarcerated.¹

All throughout the history of penal practice, religion has been a major force in determining the manner in which offenders were controlled. In ancient societies and primitive social groups, religious minds would often envelop the penal process completely with religious meaning in such a way that punishment was understood as a required sacrifice to an angry deity. In cultures such as these, crime was associated with sin, impurity, and danger. Therefore, punishment would be a process of stopping crime as well as a ritual cleansing of the pollution elements in the society.²

Restricting the freedom of movement of offenders has long been practiced in ancient and medieval cultures. Around 700 BC the Greek poet Hesiod wrote that the “capacity for living according to law and justice is what made humans uniquely human.”

¹ Charles Collard, “Prisons,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4 (1996-2013): 2, accessed Nov. 2, 2013, <http://www.catholicity.com/encyclopedia/p/prisons.html>.

² David Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society: a Study in Social Theory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 203.

For him, justice was using set procedures to settle disputes which would “reduce the inequities of wealth, power or status and allow for decisions based on the issues in dispute.” In the following century, 620-594 BC, the Greek city-state of Athens issued written laws and created an authority to oversee settlement of disputes. They created categories of crime upon which they based the punishment of criminals.³

In Ancient Greece under the reign of Draco, the death penalty was awarded for almost all criminal offenses.⁴ Since it was almost certain that a criminal could have a reasonable expectation of being sentenced to death, a guilty person would be motivated to bargain with any amount of wealth that he considered to be worth less than his life. Victims of crimes, however, were simultaneously motivated to accept tangible returns that they perceived to be more valuable to them than the administration of the death penalty. If the personal gains of restitution would outweigh the intangible losses to the victim, this would prevent them from buckling under the social pressure to enforce a death penalty. Social perceptions then could recognize there to be value to human life and productivity. Restitution then could displace physical punishments and death penalties.⁵

The ruler Draco, also known as Drakon and Dracon, gave Athens its first written Constitution. It was so indiscriminately bloody, with death as the punishment for a host of crimes, that even now "draconian" means "harsh, severe, barbarously cruel." Draco's

³ Edward M. Peters, “Prison before the prison” in *The Oxford History of the Prison: the Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, edited by Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3-4.

⁴ Douglas Maurice MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 41.

⁵ Daniel J. D’Amico, “The prison in economics: private and public incarceration in Ancient Greece,” *Public Choice*, 2010 145: 461–482 DOI 10.1007/s11127-009-9575-z Received: 5 February 2009 / Accepted: 17 November 2009 / Published online: 2 December 2009 © Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2009. 469.

law of homicide remains a part of the law. Draco reputedly was the first in Athens to distinguish premeditated, unpremeditated, and justified or accidental killing.⁶

The subsequent ruler, Solon, made penal reforms a differentiating effect upon the status of the rich and the poor. With the arrival of state subsidized imprisonment and without there being private indentured servitude, the state prison characterized the intense expression of the unequal wealth structure in Athens. Therefore, only the poorer classes would be confined to the state prison while a wealthy loser of a criminal case could afford to pay his debt and not be required to serve time in jail. If confined to jail, it was nearly impossible for poor persons to raise the money necessary to pay their debts. The poor likely went to jail more often than the rich and for longer periods of time after Solon than before. Moreover, under the previous ruler the prison gained more attention as a tangible and focal institution.⁷

Concerning the rationale for the punishment of prisoners, Plato in the dialog *Gorgias*, had Socrates to observe the following:

Now the proper office of all punishment is twofold: he who is rightly punished ought either to become better and profit by it, or he ought to be made an example to his fellows, that they may see what he suffers, and fears to suffer the like, and become better. Those who are improved when they are punished by gods and men, are those whose sins are curable.

Plato's ideas on exemplary deterrence became dominant in ancient and medieval thinking.⁸

⁶ Robert Blecker, "Ancient Greece's Death Penalty Dilemma and its Influence on Modern Society," *USA Today Magazine*, 01617389, July 2006.

⁷ D'Amico, "The prison in economics," 471.

⁸ Peters, "Prison before the prison," 5.

The Athenians viewed prisons as places for temporary custody for people waiting to be tried or for those already sentenced to punishment. They were also used as places for coercive detention for certain debtors, and as the place to torture people or to hold executions.⁹

In Egypt, the earliest records of prisons were from the Middle Kingdom 2050-1786 BC. The pharaohs, during this time, considered it their sacred duty to preserve the public order which could be disturbed by every injury to or by an Egyptian. The pharaohs established legal procedures and punishments in order to maintain the equilibrium of the universe.¹⁰

The story of the confinement of Joseph, the Hebrew slave, found in Genesis 39:20-40:5 gives an account of prisons in ancient Egypt. That prison was known as the “Great Prison.” The other inmates were royal servants confined for dereliction of duty, and foreigners thought to be spies. In the Egyptian prisons, there was no classification according to offenses. All types of offenders were held together.¹¹

The civilizations that sprang up between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers between 3000 BC and 400 BC produced codes of law. For example, the code of Hammurabi (1792-1750) was intended to maintain justice and destroy evil, and to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak. The laws themselves did not call for prisons but spoke of punishment of debt, theft, bribery and rebellion of slaves and foreign captives. The Assyrian empire (746-539 BC), like others in the Near East, imprisoned smugglers,

⁹ Peters, “Prison before the prison,” 8.

¹⁰ Peters, “Prison before the prison,” 9.

¹¹ Peters, “Prison before the prison,” 9.

thieves, deserters, and tax evaders. Foreign captives were used as forced labor. The Babylonians used prisons to confine criminals, hostages, rebels or detainees in general. The Persians in 539 BC succeeded the Assyrians and continued the practices of their predecessors.¹²

Ancient Israel, a group of the descendants of Abraham who fled Egypt around thirteenth century BC, moved to the area of Palestine and Syria. The main source of the Hebrew history is the bible which included the laws by which the people should govern themselves. Crime was considered a violation of their covenant with God, and the punishment was removal from the community by death or exile. The Deuteronomic laws make no mention of prison. The bible gives descriptions of the criminal laws and penology of the Hebrew people and other civilizations of the Near East. It is noted that there were seventeen instances of imprisonment in the narrative parts of the bible, twelve of which were outside of the Hebrew society proper, namely Egypt and Syria. The use of imprisonment that was adopted by Jewish society by the time of the writing of the Book of Jeremiah continued through to the Sanhedrin.¹³

The practice of imprisonment among the Hebrews was thought to be an imitation of the practices in neighboring states. During the exile, ordinary Jews as well as Jewish kings had endured the hardship of captivity. The flogging and imprisonment of Jeremiah the prophet by the priest came about because the priest was irritated by Jeremiah's prophecy of divine vengeance. King Zedekiah, who was later imprisoned himself, had a royal officer of the court flog and imprison Jeremiah in the court of the guard house

¹² Peters, "Prison before the prison," 10.

¹³ Peters, "Prison before the prison," 11-12.

attached to the royal palace and later put him in a water cistern that had mud and slime at the bottom. The Sanhedrin's imprisonment of Peter and John (Acts 4:3) and Saul's imprisonment of Christians was to await a decision. The use of imprisonment as derived from the non-Jewish societies were adopted by Jewish society by the time of Jeremiah. It was written and passed down through the Maccabean period and had judicial importance for the Sanhedrin. The Jewish Bible focused attention on the human condition and the confinement and release of captives ransomed by God, of refuge and sanctuary and of exile and return.¹⁴

The city state of Rome was founded in 753 BC and was ruled by kings. Emperors began to rule in the last part of the first century BC. Beginning with the reign of Constantine (AD 312-337), the early instances of imprisonment were for debtors. Other matters were to be prosecuted by the individuals in the presence of an assembly of citizens. During the mid-second century, the Roman State established specific courts to try specific offenses, and the penalties were statutory and there were no appeals to the verdict.¹⁵

In early Roman law, imprisonment for crimes was forbidden.¹⁶ Gaughan posits that even murder during the Roman republic was not a crime. There was no legislation prohibiting it. They believed that intentional killing was wrong but did not have the capacity for dealing with homicide through any of their official institutions, magistrate or by means of law. Only after the transfer of Rome from Republic to Empire, and the

¹⁴ Peters, "Prison before the prison," 13-14.

¹⁵ Peters, "Prison before the prison," 14-15.

¹⁶ Mark Cummings, ed., *The Encyclopedia Americana International Edition*. vol. 22, Danbury, CT: Grolier (1999), 621.

creation of a centralized political institution, did murder become a criminal offense and homicides found their way into the courts.¹⁷

The means of dealing with criminals prior to the nineteenth century did not necessitate the use of prisons as a means of punishment. Prisons were considered places where accused people were to be detained until trial or condemned people were to be kept until their execution. The means of getting rid of crime was to get rid of the criminal. In the modern centuries, the idea of reform and prevention of crime became more prevalent.¹⁸

Punishment methods formerly used were immediate and no form of detention was required. They included capital punishment, mutilations, flogging, the pillory, stocks, branding, compensation, fines, and compulsory exile. For the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, as well as some Saxons and Germans, the most frequently used punishment for a crime was enforced compensation to the injured. Later this procedure was substituted by feudal barons and the Church of the Middle Ages for imprisonment, torture, mutilation and death.¹⁹

From the medieval period forward, the Western legal systems have separated themselves from religious authorities and conceptions; however, vestiges of that earlier

¹⁷ Ion Restea, "The Roman System of Criminal Justice: The Role of Law in Roman Trials," *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* 3, no 1: 146, accessed March 7, 2014, *Publisher provided full Text Searching File*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁸ James Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 339.

¹⁹ Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 339.

religious culture still remained. From the Middle Ages right up to the present, religious belief remains an important force in shaping the practice and evolution of punishment.²⁰

During the Enlightenment or Age of Reason, there was focus on making a just society. Established institutions were questioned and people were encouraged to use reason. Ideas about crime and justice were revisited as well as “procedures to be used to determine guilt, the limits on government power to punish, the nature of criminal behavior and the best ways to correct offenders.”²¹

Garland relates that the medieval Roman Catholic Church was responsible for the development of much of the penal techniques which were later sanctioned and used by some of the secular states. As a result of the incompatibility of blood sanctions with the clerical status and beliefs, the ecclesiastical courts were led to develop their own institutions of imprisonment. The practices of cellular confinement and penitential discipline were instituted as a result of the spiritual exercises of the monastic orders. The Vatican prison was used as a model for designing prisons both in Europe and America, as late as the end of the eighteenth century. The Protestant Reformation also played a part in the development of secular imprisonment. The Dutch houses of correction of the sixteenth century, and later the Quaker penitentiaries of the early nineteenth century, helped to create a combination of solitary cellular confinement and productive work. This combination of work and solitude were supposed to produce spiritual redemption along with painful bodily punishment.²²

²⁰ Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society*, 204.

²¹ Todd R. Clear, George F. Cole and Michael D Reisig, *American Corrections*, 8th ed (Belmont, CA: Thompson Learning, Inc., 2009), 34-35.

²² Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society*, 204.

Traces of this religious inheritance can be seen in the architecture and design of many of the older prison buildings, especially those penitentiaries which promoted spiritual regeneration and reform that was religiously inspired. The cells were designed as miniature chapels in a prison in Trenton, New Jersey; it had vaulted ceilings, and small windows high up on the wall, and stoop-to-enter doorways. This still stands today as an architectural reminder of this religious vision and influence and how religion impacted prison design for buildings which followed this penitential model of imprisonment.²³

The religious influence upon prison reform and penal policy remained a powerful one throughout the nineteenth century. Garland posits that the Evangelicals were in the forefront of the reforming movement both in Britain and in the USA. These reformers helped to ameliorate the conditions of captivity as well as assisted prisoners upon their release. Later, the Evangelicals worked toward developing alternatives to imprisonment such as probation. The idea stemmed from missionary work which was usually funded by church-based temperance groups.²⁴

Today, it is still the churches and religious groups that are in the forefront of those who agitate and arouse public interest in penal reform. The religions have creeds, theologies and languages of their own, as well as churches, office-bearers, and a community of believers who identify themselves in these beliefs. They provide resources for needy offenders. The prison chaplain still plays a small part in the life of prisoners. However, the chaplain has a limited pastoral mission and a limited influence in the spiritual lives of the prisoners. The chaplain's role has sometimes been restricted to that

²³ Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society*, 204.

²⁴ Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society*, 204.

of social worker. The influence of religion upon punishment is evident in the way that religious cultural systems are articulated.²⁵

Through the writings of Cesare Beccaria in Italy and Jeremy Bentham in England, more emphasis and a greater value were being put on human life. Beccaria and Bentham supported fair and speedy trials, imprisonment and punishment that would be sufficient enough to be a deterrent but not so severe as to be excessive. Their ideas led to crimes being codified and well defined. As a result, extreme penalties were less frequently remitted. In addition, the necessities of colonization allowed for the exportation of prisoners to the new world.²⁶ In January 1788, the first Australian penal colony was established with 778 men and women who were mainly petty thieves. Between 1788 and 1868, there were approximately 170,000 criminals transported from Great Britain to Australia.²⁷ The State of Georgia also was first founded by James Edward Oglethorpe by using penal prisoners taken largely from debtors' prison, creating a "Debtor's Colony."²⁸

Beccaria's "Essay on Crimes and Punishment" impacted greatly the reform of the legal system in the mid-eighteenth century. Beccaria concerned himself with the inequality of extremely harsh punishment which was given to relative minor offenses. The motto of the Classical School was: "the punishment fit the crime." This was a

²⁵ Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society*, 204.

²⁶ Jeanne B Stinchcomb and Vernon B. Fox, *Introduction to Corrections* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999), 45.

²⁷ Samir S. Patel, "Australia's Shackled Pioneers," *Archaeology* 64, no. 4 (July 2011): 45, accessed March 9, 2014, *Masterfile elite*, EBSCOhost.

²⁸ "United States," *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th edition (September 2013): 1, accessed March 9, 2014, Publisher provided full text searching file, EBSCOhost.

revolutionary thought at a time when a man's hand could be cut off for stealing a loaf of bread.²⁹

In 1790, the Philadelphia Society established the first penitentiary at the Walnut Street Jail. It was used for the correction of convicted felons. It was the first institution which from its inception stated that it was designed to reform.³⁰

Christianity, having had many of its followers jailed for their faith, has influenced prisons and the treatment of those incarcerated. Christians were charged to care for and comfort the incarcerated Christians. They were charged to provide food, clothing, and money to "procure certain mitigations, even liberty." The bishops early in their history began to purchase the freedom of prisoners. The church also extended help and protection to criminals. Crime for the church was first of all considered sin. The church sought to punish and correct people by means other than prisons.³¹

The edit of Valentine I, in 367 AD, allowed for the opening of prisons at Easter and permitting prisoners to go free, except for those arrested for such crimes as sacrilege, poisoning, treason, adultery, raping or murder. Under Constantine and Charlemagne, the right to asylum came into being. These rights allowed that those taking refuge in a church could not be taken by force and should be left alone until the court had decided the case. The bishops also had the right to intercede on behalf of the prisoner. They could

²⁹ Stinchcomb and Fox, *Introduction to Corrections*, 66.

³⁰ Stinchcomb and Fox, *Introduction to Corrections*, 66.

³¹ James Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 339.

ask the civil judge to pardon the condemned prisoner or to have the prisoner discharged.³²

Through the influence of the church, improvements were made in the plight of prisoners. The Council of Nicaea (325) ordered the visitation of jails. The Synod of Orleans (549) obligated the archdeacons to see all the prisoners on Sundays. Moreover, during the time of Constantine the Great, the intervention of the church became more active. The bishop and priest were also given the authority to monitor the conduct of the judges. In addition, they could visit on certain weekdays and speak to the prisoners about their situation. They could ascertain the reason they were imprisoned and what their needs were. They were admonished to minister to the prisoner's spiritual needs as well as their physical welfare.³³

The papacy was a great influence on the prison system in Rome and passed regulations improving conditions in prisons. Clement XII is considered the father of the modern penitentiary system. He promoted the idea used by the Dutch of separation by night and work during the day. Their thought was to "reclaim culprits by separation, silence, work and prayer." Their motto was: "It avails little to punish the wicked unless you reform them by discipline."³⁴

John Howard, an English prison reformer, gained the recognition of being the father of prison reform. While serving in the office of High Sheriff, he began inspecting prisons. He learned that prisoners were remaining in jail long after they had been

³² Collard, "Prisons," 2.

³³ Collard, "Prisons," 2.

³⁴ Collard, "Prisons," 3.

acquitted because they had not been able to pay the jailer's fee. Howard implored the judges to pay a salary to the jail keeper in order to eliminate the need for jailer's fees. The judges challenged Howard to find precedents in other counties and thus began his travelling and visiting jails throughout the region. He recorded the wretchedness he found in the prisons of the British Isles.³⁵

Howard was a Calvinist and deeply religious. His compassion compelled him to advocate for the abolition of jail fees, for the separation of male and female, and for the prisoners to have decent food and clothes. He also advocated for clean and well maintained jails and promoted useful occupation for the inmates.³⁶

According to William Dixon, Howard expanded his work through his travel throughout Europe. He continued visiting and documenting the care and treatment of inmates in the different prisons. It was through Howard's work that prison science began.³⁷

During Howard's tour of the prisons in England, he realized that it was important not only to provide for better treatment but also to make better citizens of the prisoners. Howard concluded that no emphasis was put on religious worship. Therefore, he proposed that each prison have a chapel and a chaplain available to minister to those who are incarcerated.³⁸

³⁵ David Chapman, "The Legendary John Howard and Prison Reform in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation* (University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) 54, no. 4. 545, accessed December 2, 2013, *Publisher Provided Full Text Searching File*, EBSCOhost.

³⁶ Chapman, "The Legendary John Howard," 548.

³⁷ William Hepworth Dixon, *John Howard, and the Prison-World of Europe* (New York, NY: Robert and Brothers, 1850), 31.

³⁸ Dixon, *John Howard, and the Prison*, 39.

John Howard found out that even in Europe, the prisoners were terribly mistreated. There was lack of sufficient food and the poor ventilation caused health issues. Also, the anguish of having neither beds to sleep on nor heat in the winter or times to exercise put them at risk.³⁹ Chapman related that Howard had a particular sympathy for the women and recorded the following:

For women, especially those that have children with them, and sometimes at the breast, there should be a chimney in one or two rooms; and in winter they should be allowed firing. I have known infants starved to death for want of this.

He made it known that the living situation for the women were horrific and in much need of amelioration.⁴⁰

However, on Howard's visit to Holland, he found that prisons were clean and prisoners had sufficient food and humane treatment. Care was taken to provide moral and religious instruction to prepare the prisoners for their return to society.⁴¹ John Howard, an English prison reformer of the eighteenth century and a philanthropist, effected change in prison discipline. He proposed the remedy to be achieved through religious training as well as work. He held that the society was bound by brotherhood to reclaim the law breakers and give him food and subject him to a regime of personal hygiene. In the United States, the Quakers contributed to the reform movement by their rejection of capital punishment, except for murder, and of corporal punishment. They promoted the belief that hard labor and meditation would get positive results. Collard posits that the

³⁹ David Horton, *Prisoners in Penology: The Reformers, the Institutions and the Societies, 1557-1900* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 144.

⁴⁰ Chapman, "The Legendary John Howard," 548.

⁴¹ Horton, *Prisoners in Penology*, 85.

society has a duty to aid deserving liberated prisoners, who without support would be at risk of falling again into crime.⁴²

Elizabeth Gurney Fry (1780-1845) was well known for her work in prison reform. She was concerned about men and women prisoners but had a particular interest in the plight of women prisoners. Fry thought it implausible that there could be incarceration with the belief that the offender could change for the better and have the ability to learn to lead a meaningful life in the community. However, she realized that this change could not start without the person being treated as a human being.⁴³

Faced with the fact that prison authorities assumed that all incarcerated women were incorrigible, Fry formed a committee consisting of Quaker volunteers to visit with the women. The following statements were recorded in her *Memoirs*:

The imprisoned women whom she first visited were crowded together with their children in space hardly more than allowed for slaves in a galley, 'tried and untried,' misdemeanant and felons . . . in rags and dirt . . . sleeping without bedding on the floor" and watched over only by a man and his son.

Through the association of volunteers, emphasis was placed on bible readings. The association brought clothing and cloth so that the women could sew and earn remuneration to care for their personal needs. Soon after, the association provided the salary for a woman to be the resident matron in lieu of the man and his son. This

⁴² Collard, "Prisons," 3.

⁴³ George M. Anderson, "Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845): Timeless Reformer," *America* 173. Issue 11 (Oct. 14, 1995): 22.

arrangement produced much better and more beneficial results leading to the subsequent assumption of the cost of the matron by the prison authorities.⁴⁴

Fry was successful in convincing prison authorities to provide more living space and to classify prisoners according to the seriousness of their crimes. She later was able to convince the governor of the prison to permit her to begin a school in a room within the prison. The initiatives began by Fry gave the women a sense of self-esteem that they did not have beforehand.⁴⁵

Clear indicates that the purpose of corrections was the punishment of people who have broken the rules of society. He maintains that “from the earliest accounts of humankind, punishment has been used as one means of social control, of compelling people to behave according to the norms and rules of society.” He notes that crime is the most serious type of behavior over which a society must gain control.”⁴⁶

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, asserts that maintaining social order is the main function of punishment. He denies the idea that punishment is a deterrent to control individual conduct. He posits that punishment is to uphold the moral sensibilities in order to buttress the conscience which would disturb one’s faith. The punishment via hardship and suffering signals the importance of having a moral message. Durkheim suggests that “the physical harm, prison cells, monetary penalties, and stigmatization are signs which

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 22.

⁴⁵ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 22.

⁴⁶ Clear, Cole and Reisig, *American Corrections*, 8.

people express and reproach of the express disapproval, reproach and power of the moral order”.⁴⁷

History has shown that intervention of Christians in the life of incarcerated persons can help to restore in them dignity, self-esteem and moral sensibility. Such intervention produces a better product to be integrated into the society. The Christian’s involvement with prisons in terms of amelioration of conditions and care of the incarcerated has led to changes in how prisoners are housed and treated. Moreover, the most pertinent practice of the church was to deal with the mind and spirit of the person. The charge is to awaken or instill a moral compass in the prisoner that would become a guide to the development of good moral character. With reform, the availability of professional and intellectual training to accompany religious training has improved the overall condition of incarcerated persons and gives them a more positive outlook and hope for a future outside of prison. The Christian appeal for social justice and the call for repentance and reconciliation in addition to the promotion of social, religious, and moral values have opened the way for the incarcerated to be received into society as a demonstration of the grace and mercy of God.

⁴⁷ Garland, *Punishment and Modern Society*, 43-44.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation)

The theological foundations for the reconciliation, renewal and restoration of offenders are found in the doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ and the doctrine of grace. John Wesley wrote that “the righteousness of Christ is the whole and foundation of all our hope and it is by faith that the Holy Ghost enables us to build upon this foundation.”¹ Wesley also wrote that it was Christ who reconciled sinners to God and that they could be restored to fellowship with God. He noted that salvation was neither limited to the spiritual elite nor to the economic elite, but was available to everyone who came to Christ, and that by faith they might receive the grace of God.²

The powerful love of God that Paul describes in Romans 5:6-11(NIV) gives credence to the importance of mankind to the plan and purpose of God:

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath

¹ John Wesley, “The Lord Our Righteousness XX”, in *Sermons 1, Wesley’s Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, reprint 1979), 241-244.

² Michael Duduit, *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 31.

through him.¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Ex-offenders are singled out as persons of sin and devalued in their worth. This passage above, however, reminds us that all of humankind is sinful whether or not one's sins are made public. This should humble everyone in this regard of sinfulness and worth.

Henry Knight, III adds to this ongoing conversation about salvation. He points out that at the heart of John Wesley's soteriology was the restoration of the *Imago Dei*. Wesley believed that "we were created in God's image and the very heart of that image is love." Wesley maintains his claim to the Protestant doctrine of original sin and holds to the idea of the goal of salvation being in the realm of theosis. (Theosis, or Theopoiesis, is the process of being made like God, also called divinization).³ Wesley, however, keeps the connection between the two separate thoughts relevant because he is able to link the act of grace to what God has done in Christ and to the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit which enables mankind to have the love that was in Christ to abide in their hearts and to manifest in their lives. The transformation of the love of Christ in human lives, according to Wesley's soteriology, can appear gradually or instantaneously.⁴ Therefore, the love of Christ makes it possible for us to have love for one another.

³ Justo L. Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 171.

⁴ Henry H. Knight III, "Love and Freedom by Grace Alone" in *Wesley's Soteriology: A Proposal for Evangelicals*, *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 24, Issue 1 (Spring 2002): 58.

In his sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” John Wesley speaks to the free mercy of God, indicating that salvation is extended to the entire “work of God.” It begins with the first drawing of grace in the soul and continues until it is completed in glory. This action includes everything that is produced in the soul by the natural conscience or by prevenient grace. Accordingly, if one yields to the drawing of God the Father, the desire for God will increase the more.⁵

Salvation, Wesley contends, consists of two general parts: justification and sanctification. Justification, he posits, is another word for pardon. “It is the forgiveness of all our sins; and what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God.” He indicated also that there is a price paid for the procurement of justification which is the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ who poured out his soul for the transgressor.⁶

The immediate effects of justification are peace and joy, at which time sanctification begins:

In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us: producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honor, of money, together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into the mind which was in Christ Jesus.⁷

Here, Wesley speaks not only about a new birth but also about the process of moving from the carnal to the realm of the spirit. Salvation is a central concept or tenet of faith

⁵ John Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 5th edition. Edited and annotated by Edward H. Sugden (London, England: The Epworth Press, 1964), 445.

⁶ Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 445.

⁷ Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 446.

for people of the covenant (church). It is not enough for an individual to simply say: I am saved. The work of the Holy Spirit continues also in one's life in the context of being sanctified.

Sanctification

Again, the Holy Spirit is operative in the life of the believer in the context of being sanctified. We understand sanctification to be “a process that takes one from pride, self-will, anger and unbelief to perfect love allowing love to fill our hearts to the capacity of the soul. Faith is the only condition for justification. Everyone who believes is justified. As we are justified by faith, we are also sanctified by faith.”⁸ In this understanding, salvation involves both being saved (soteriology), justified and sanctified.

Faith is at the center of the Christian life and teachings of Jesus. Addressing the subject of faith, Reinhold Niebuhr, in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, states that:

The assertion of Christian Faith is that the knowledge of God through the crucified Christ is both “wisdom” and “power,” both “grace” and “truth,” which is to say that not only are life and history now fully known by having found their true end and meaning beyond themselves but they are also completed and fulfilled. Christ as “power” and as “grace” can be mediated to the individual only if the truth of the atonement is appropriated inwardly. In that case the alternate moods of despair and false hope are overcome and the individual is actually freed to live a life on serenity and creativity.⁹

Through the knowledge of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for a community of faithful believers to influence society.¹⁰ This influence can be directed towards meeting the needs of ex-offenders reentering society. It can be done by providing

⁸ Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 448-453.

⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2 vols., Volume II (Louisville: KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1964), 57-58.

¹⁰ Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, 57-58.

for the spiritual need to help overcome despair and to give hope to those who desire to participate in improving society.

Salvation in a Liberation Context

Derek Simon discusses the ideas of salvation and liberation through the lenses of Edward Schillebeeckx. For Schillebeeckx, Jesus Christ was the eschatological prophet whose life, death, and resurrection provided a witness to the inbreaking of the reign of God which was the beginning of salvation for human beings. He posits that it is Jesus who is shown as a contingent and finite human being that is completely identified with and totally empowered by the inbreaking reign of God. Jesus is so identified with and empowered by this inbreaking reign of God that his praxis intrinsically describes God's reign of love as also a reign of justice and reconciliation among human beings.¹¹

Jesus represented the eschatological community of justice and reconciliation by way of his ministry and in his person. He was a witness to the solidarity of God with vulnerable and suffering people. In order to show his solidarity, he identifies with those who are considered marginalized, those who are poor, and those who are disadvantaged. When Jesus shows active solidarity with those who are vulnerable, he discloses a recognizably partisan preference to unrestricted reconciliation.¹²

Schillebeeckx's view is towards the universal reign of God which would require Jesus' solidarity in order for the marginalized and disadvantaged to be able to overcome

¹¹ Derek J. Simon, "Salvation and Liberation in the Practical-Critical Soteriology of Schillebeeckx," *Theological Studies* 63, no. 3 (September 2002): 494, accessed November 25, 2013, *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCOhost 500.

¹² Simon, "Salvation and Liberation," 494.

all forms of historical exclusion through social practices. Even though one speaks of universality, Christian love is, in a sociopolitical perspective, very strongly partisan.¹³

How then is the church to come to understand this work of Jesus in its life, as well as the lives of others who are outside of the church, including the incarcerated and those recently released. It has to be done through systematic teaching in the context of faith development. This leads to the category of Practical Theology in the way that it is expressed in Christian education.

Practical Theology

Christian Education

Christian education, in a church or group context, presents a means by which ex-offenders might be taught biblical concepts and character traits. Lewis Sherrill distinguishes Christian theology from other efforts to deal with issues of human existence. He is of the conviction that God has revealed himself to man through his Word.¹⁴

It is Christian education that should move the individual from isolation, incompleteness or disintegration to wholeness. This wholeness comes as a result of dynamic relationships which the New Testament refers to as fellowship. The church facilitates these relationships so that individuals are drawn away from loneliness,

¹³ Simon, "Salvation and Liberation," 494.

¹⁴ Lewis Joseph Sherrill, "Theological Foundations of Christian Education," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (January 1, 1951): 7, accessed March 12, 2014, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

isolation, incompleteness, self-centeredness, and frustration. Instead, they are drawn to wholeness through a “warm sense of belonging within a group of one’s fellows.” This is not only applicable to ex-offenders upon reentry but to all disciples of Christ. The body of Christ is recognizable when this is operative in the lives of these two groups.¹⁵

The Bible shows concern for behavior that does not express “wholeness of interpersonal relations within a living community.” Miller relates that “a biblical approach to punishment would modify vengeance and would attempt to reestablish law as a living relationship in a normal community.”¹⁶ He emphasizes the need for community relations. Miller related that Christian education should have as its goal to make it possible for an individual to achieve a Christian identity. This identity gives a believer meaning and purpose. It helps the individual to see the world with new eyes. “Identity is a correlate of perception: as one sees the world, so is one.” Therefore, the goal of Christian education is to “transform perception according to a Christian world view . . . which unites individuals with the future of the Christian community.”¹⁷ Individuals in Christian communities share the path to liberation and to the cultivation of responsible behavior. There is a wealth of symbolic forms that are highly valued as virtues of the Christian community. These forms greatly affect the interpersonal, intellectual, traditional and practical life of the religious community.¹⁸ This enterprise of faith development is

¹⁵ Sherrill, “Theological Foundations of Christian Education,” 10.

¹⁶ Donald E. Miller, “Punishment and Rehabilitation,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 29 no 1. (Winter 1984): 21-26.

¹⁷ Donald E. Miller, *The Case for Liberal Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publisher, 1981), 103-105.

¹⁸ Miller, *The Case for Liberal Christianity*, 103-105.

rooted in study and is integral for growing spiritually. When experiencing spiritual growth, one is liberated mentally and emotionally. People of African ancestry, in particular, understand this in light of their collective life in America. Hence, a central element of faith involves being liberated in all facets of life. This concept is developed and explored in liberation theology and black theology.

Liberation Theology and Black Theology

Daniel Reid relates that James H. Cone, in *A Black Theology of Liberation*, contends that Christianity is merely a religion of liberation. He equates Christian theology to black theology in that it identifies with the “goals of the oppressed community” and seeks to “interpret the divine character of their struggle for liberation.”¹⁹ In contrast, well-known white theologians, Johnathan Edwards, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Walter Rauschenbasch, sought to relate to their racial community. However, they did not apply their “intellectual power to support people of color in their fight for justice. The plight of blacks and the Third World was invisible to them.”²⁰

Christian theology, Cone writes, must have relevance to the oppressed blacks in America. Black theology asserts that the substance of Christian theology is liberation:

This means that theology is a rational and passionate study of the revolutionary activity of God in the world in the light of the historical situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel which is Jesus Christ. Theology so defined moves us in the direction of biblical tradition which focuses on the activity of God in history, liberating people from human bondage. God according

¹⁹ Daniel G. Reid, Robert Dean Linder, Bruce Shelley, and Harry S. Stout. *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 68.

²⁰ James H. Cone, *Risk of Faith* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999), xvii.

to the Bible, is known by what he does, and what he does is always related to the liberation of the oppressed.²¹

In Exodus 19:45, it is revealed through Israel's covenant connection in their escape from slavery, that Yahweh is the God of the oppressed and downtrodden. God's salvation being equated with liberation is found throughout biblical history. It is found specifically in the incarnate appearance of God in Jesus Christ.²²

Black liberation theology came into prominence primarily through the writings of James Cone, even though there were other writers who preceded him such as Charles Copher who was not as well-known or prominent. Black theology's Christian identity was further developed by Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. in his sermons, speeches and writings, although he was not looked upon primarily as a black theology proponent by many. One must be reminded that King earned his doctorate degree in systematic theology from Boston University. King understood black theology to be the "practice of justice and love in human relations and hope that God has not left the least of these alone in their suffering."²³ The theology of Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. focused on the themes of "justice, love and hope." These themes are all grounded in the faith of the Black Church in Jesus Christ.²⁴

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.'s theology also embodies the central ideas of the integrationist tradition which share in the "political optimism of Protestant liberalism. It . . . embraced the values of the American democratic tradition as embodied in the

²¹ Cone, *Risk of Faith*, 32.

²² Cone, *Risk of Faith*, 32.

²³ Cone, *Risk of Faith*, xviii.

²⁴ Cone, *Risk of Faith*, 54.

Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, providing for King's approach to white America. This thought resonated with the Black Church tradition especially with the sense of hope and the value of the human personality."²⁵ Though technically free, black people in the time of King's active ministry, and to some extent today, still feel in bondage in terms of racism and bigotry from the larger community. Whether expressed as liberation or black theology or not, these people felt the need to be liberated from all that oppressed them.

Through liberation theology, the church is given the urgent task of implementing in the world the "sociopolitical liberation of the poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged from those political, social, legal or economic forces that reserve the power in society for the established power structures. These power structures prevent the needy from participating in the shaping their own destinies."²⁶ The church is accordingly considered to be on the side of those who are not empowered and in opposition to the established institutions of society.²⁷

James Harris, in *Preaching Liberation*, writes that black theology has described Jesus as "the liberator." He bases his proclamation on what the gospel of Luke attributes to Jesus: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of

²⁵ Cone, *Risk of Faith*, 54-55.

²⁶ David G. Brenner and Peter C. Hill, eds. *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 686.

²⁷ Brenner and Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 686.

sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19, NIV)."²⁸ This text places Jesus at ground zero for liberation.

Harris goes on to cite James H. Cone as saying "Jesus Christ, therefore, in his humanity and divinity is the point of departure for . . . the meaning of liberation."²⁹

Harris points out that starting with Jesus, the liberator, as the foundation upon which the personal liberation and the transformation of the society takes place, it is then possible that liberation preaching can be done through reflecting deeply upon the varying and dynamic dimensions of Jesus Christ as the liberator.³⁰

Bishop Joseph A. Johnson, Jr. is another preacher/pastor and writer who lends his voice to the subject of liberation as a theology. In his book, *The Soul of the Black Preacher*, Johnson explains:

Jesus is liberator. He is the revelation of wisdom, the power and the love of God. This was the message which the early Christian preachers were commissioned to proclaim. This message was called the kerygma. We preach Christ, Paul shouts. At the heart of the kerygma lies this fundamental Christological affirmation: Jesus is the Liberator.³¹

The liberation and transformation preaching is kerygmatic preaching and therefore must retain Jesus Christ as the essential message.³² This message is liberating whether or not many communities of different races acknowledge it as a subset of classical theology.

²⁸ James H. Harris, *Preaching Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995). 30.

²⁹ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 30.

³⁰ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 30.

³¹ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 30.

³² Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 30.

In this writer's view, the church should play an important role in the preparation of ex-offenders to lead a new restored life. The visible church should be the beacon of light to serve as a guide to those who are lost or oppressed that they should find refuge. Certainly there is the invisible church which focuses on the immaterial matters, but I believe that it is to the visible church that Matthew 25 is referring to when he says:

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'
(Matthew 25:34-36, NIV)

Jesus Christ shows concern and compassion. Therefore, the church as an extension of God's goodness, should show the same mercy to the oppressed and downtrodden people. These verses are an indication that the heart of man should not be hardened to the plight of the less fortunate.

Another voice that speaks to the liberating factors of theology is Bishop Desmond Tutu. For Tutu, theology is considered provisional and temporal. His theology is never in an inert state. It acts in response to the existential needs of a particular people during a specific generation. Tutu differs from much of classical theology (Tillich) in that he posits that there are neither norms that are universally valid nor criteria that authenticate theological reflection. The validity of Tutu's theology is judged based upon the theology's relevance and importance to the immediate situation. Tutu finds this to be a

principle that is used in biblical accounts regarding the experiences and events of the Hebrew people.³³

Tutu contends that black theology is a contextual theology and is relevant to the racism and the involuntary repression faced by people of color. This type of contextual theology concerns itself with humanization, liberation, forgiveness, and justice.³⁴ Tutu's theology is "holistic and organic" in that it is a black theology that effects the liberation of white oppressors just as much as the black oppressed. As with all other theologies of liberation, it is directed toward the elimination of suffering. It looks to maintain black sanity in a racist world that promotes the absurdity of black suffering. Tutu suggests that his theology is a reflection on the fact that God created people black purposely. This theology seeks to discover optimum development and expansion of the potential of the black self.³⁵

Many African Americans, trained theologians as well as others, preach and write about liberation/black theology unapologetically. There are other voices, many of whom are black Africans such as Tutu, who framed their work under the banner of black theology, while others simply speak to the nature of this tone of preaching and writing as liberation theology. Regardless of the categorization, the nature and substance of the events in the human experience are the same: racism and sexism. There are, however, other theologians normally acknowledged as persons dealing with classical theology who

³³ Julian Kunnie, "Desmond Tutu" in "A New Handbook of Christian Theologians in Abingdon," *Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1996) 481.

³⁴ Kunnie, "Desmond Tutu," 481.

³⁵ Kunnie, "Desmond Tutu," 481-82.

also speak about liberating aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of persons reaching their full potential, even if they do not do so under the rubric of “race and religion.”

Classical Theology: Niebuhr and Tillich: In Conversation about Human Potentiality

The church must have as a focus to rebuild the moral fabric of society. This is done by helping the members develop spiritual and meaningful lives. The church must set examples of love and peace. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr writes:

Since there are always unrealized potentialities in human life, which remain undeveloped, if hope does not encourage their development the optimism of the rationalists and educators is not without value. If their optimism should be too unqualified, it need not result in serious error, when they deal with the facts of individual life. Education can no doubt solve many problems of society, and can increase the capacity of men to envisage the needs of their fellows and to live in harmonious and equitable relations with them. In individual relations a great confidence in the undeveloped potentialities of the human spirit.³⁶

Here, Niebuhr points out the need of the faithful in helping to realize the potential of all of God’s children, including those incarcerated. More than a few persons have left incarceration and put their positive stamp on their local community, and society as a whole, in making great contributions to the world in which we live. Many persons in communities throughout the country can point to individuals that they know who have left prisons and made contributions to society.

This subject of developing one’s human potential is further developed and explored in the writings of Paul Tillich. In his book *Morality and Beyond*, Tillich posits

³⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 24-25.

that there is a “moral imperative to become what a person potentially is.”³⁷ Both Niebuhr and Tillich address the subject of “potentiality” as it relates not simply to educational attainment but to spiritual development. Kay Warren discusses and amplifies Tillich’s theological method of correlation. This method explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence.³⁸

An analysis of the human condition is necessary to determine the existential question³⁹ and the Christian response to provide answers to the questions. The questions express the deep concerns of humanity. For Tillich, the existential analysis shows that man perceives that he is the gateway to the deeper levels of reality, and that man also perceives that in his own existence he has the only possible approach to that existence.⁴⁰

As a result of variations in experiences, Tillich developed a norm of theology within his systematic theology against which sources and experiences might be judged. His thought was that there must be some principle against which these sources and experiences can be judged in order for the Christian faith to have definite content and theology to have organization. Tillich felt that a new expression of the norm of theology was necessary. There needed to be a norm that expressed the disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life⁴¹

³⁷ Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1963), 19.

³⁸ Kay A. Warren, “Paul Tillich” in *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians* in *Abingdon Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 452.

³⁹ Warren, “Paul Tillich,” 452.

⁴⁰ Warren, “Paul Tillich,” 452.

⁴¹ Warren, “Paul Tillich,” 453.

Tillich questions the reality in which the self-estrangement of one's existence is overcome. A question arises concerning the reality of reconciliation and reunion, creativity, meaning, and hope. This reconciliation is based on 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NRSV) which declares that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. The new norm for Tillich's theology is manifested in Jesus as the Christ, answering the question implied in human existence.⁴²

Ecclesiology

Socialization and education play important roles in enabling offenders to reinvent themselves in order not to be pariahs to be avoided and despised merely because of their existence and circumstances. For some, education of the mind provides a new playing field and a new set of rules not in their previous playbook. These rules are not connected to drugs, theft or violence. Drew Leder suggests that it is the Christian's duty to educate prisoners because it is cost-effective and soul effective. He maintains that each individual is immeasurably valuable to God and is loved by God. He posits that there is no sinner who is so unworthy that he is beyond salvation. God forgives because God understands the depth of human frailty and sin. It is through forgiveness and the divine power of love that one can rebuild one's life regardless of the depth to which one has fallen.⁴³

The church cannot be so consumed with itself, that is, with its own righteousness or personal holiness to the point where it cannot see the need for it to look into and

⁴² Warren, "Paul Tillich," 453.

⁴³ Drew Leder, "It's our Christian duty to educate prisoners," *U.S. Catholic*, 61, Issue 3, (Mar 96):12.

participate in issues of social justice and offer hope to suffering humanity. The church demonstrates Christ when reaching out to help mankind, including ex-offenders created in the image of God, to cross that wide and winding river back into the realm of humaneness after being entrenched in the world of spiritual dimness problematic to the prison environment. The nature of this world is alien to the society to which they aspire to return and must therefore be emotionally, educationally, and socially equipped to navigate.

The church can help ex-offenders grow to become viable parts of the community. It can help them focus on the moral and acceptable means by which they might gain entrance into a society from which they had been marginalized and will probably remain so unless given an opportunity to reach their real potential through godly intervention. Herein one finds the availability of a great arena and conditions favorable to influence the life and activity of people at risk of being harmed or harmful to others.

A report adopted by the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church reflects the acceptance of Christ's agenda in Isaiah 61:1-4. The church should work for the deliverance of persons held captive by the powers and principalities of this world and to bind the brokenhearted and to give garlands instead of ashes. The agenda is to work on behalf of the poor, the alienated and those that are dispossessed.⁴⁴

The agenda also compels the believers to work as God's agents of reconciling love. It is hoped that God's people would lead in the establishment of communities that would respond to the call for justice and peace. In 2 Corinthians 5:18, it is written that

⁴⁴ "Christian Witness in the City: A Biblical and Theological Foundation," *Church & Society* 86, no. 2 (November 1, 1995): 25, accessed March 12, 2014, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

all . . . is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to God's self and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. It is also believed that God's agenda includes working for the salvation of individuals and for the redemption of structures and institutions.⁴⁵

The report quotes St. Augustine's *The City of God* as maintaining that "To be a member of the community of faith does not, however, remove us from responsible membership in the human (secular) city. St. Augustine sought to refute the idea that Christians were indifferent to the welfare of the earthly community. He believes that it is Christ who carries us to reconciling engagement with humankind. God's grace, however, works in us where we are. Those who have offended in the secular receive grace for forgiveness, peace and reconciliation."⁴⁶

In *Minding the Good Ground*, Jason Vickers refers to the church as a spiritual hospital whose mission would be to care for the sick. As a spiritual hospital, the church has many medicinal resources available to it. Through the persons and practices of the church melded with the Holy Spirit, we are healed in body, mind and soul and transformed into newness of life. Vickers also notes that:

As the divine physician, the Holy Spirit leads us to participate in the work of healing through reading the Scriptures, sharing our faith administering the sacraments, preaching and praying, passing on the teachings of the apostles, assisting one another in confessing our sins and announcing forgiveness, anointing the sick, reaching out to the wider community through works of mercy and social justice, and helping one another more fully to know, love, and thoroughly enjoy the grace of the Holy Trinity in the midst of it all.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Christian Witness in the City," 25.

⁴⁶ "Christian Witness in the City," 27-28.

⁴⁷ Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2001), 92.

All these prescriptions are available to those in need. However, it is the job of the church attendees to perform the duties so ascribed by the Holy Spirit and be the means by which the medicine is dispensed.⁴⁸

The church's function is rescuing people and restoring them. The rescuing occurs when people and communities are delivered from sin's destructiveness. The destruction might be emotional, physical, intellectual, or spiritual. Destruction comes through pride, greed, and among others, disordered desires. In order to properly and effectively work in restoration, the church must walk in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to heal the brokenness and dysfunction of individuals and the community. Restoration to the joy of communion with the Holy Spirit will provide liberty and health. The church has the necessary resources but it is only with the Holy Spirit that the church will prosper in the things it sets its hand to do.⁴⁹

In the *Christian Century*, Jonathan Walton's article "Empowered" places Bishop T. D. Jakes at the forefront of promoting a message of psychological healing, emotional deliverance and economic empowerment, especially to those who are not residing near the top of America's economic pyramid. In the article, Walton quotes "Preachers, Profits and the Prophetic: The New Face of American Evangelicalism" in a public conversation with Cornel West. Jakes described his ministry:

From my pulpit I not only sought to win souls to Christ but to also challenge them that they be freed from poverty, narrow-mindedness and the lack of information that can keep you still enslaved even in our contemporary society because you can't control your destiny. Some of the challenges that we face are not just racism

⁴⁸ Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 93.

⁴⁹ Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 93.

but they are economic empowerment, moving beyond self-hatred; it's giving ourselves permission to be successful.⁵⁰

Through this framework, Jake sought to expand the mind of believers embracing the empowerment of men and women to reach their God given capacities.⁵¹

As a praxis of his liberation rhetoric, Jakes initiated an offender reentry initiative. He made a commitment to help improve the lives of people, who by virtue of having made mistakes in their past which cost them their freedom and would make their full acceptance back into society a very arduous and intricate matter. His objective is to give assistance to ex-offenders by providing guidance in making better decisions, thereby avoiding future incarcerations that would be caused by repeating and engaging in the same dangerous and destructive life-cycle which would lead them further away from mainstream society.⁵²

Improving the life of an ex-offender can come through rehabilitation; however, Jakes posits that assimilation is more essential because it begins to deal with issues and recognizes the triggers which often compel the ex-offender to make flawed decisions similar to those which led to their initial incarceration. It is the group's focus to change the perception of society, as well as move the church toward being an instrument in revitalizing the human spirit and the thinking of the ex-offender. Remodeling the mentality of the ex-criminal must be done in conjunction with the people, who consider

⁵⁰ Jonathan L. Walton, "Empowered," *Christian Century*, 124, no. 14, (July 7, 2007): 28.

⁵¹ Walton, "Empowered," *Christian Century*, 28.

⁵² "Texas Offender Re-Entry Initiative," accessed March 3, 2014, <http://www.medc-tori.org/>.

rehabilitation necessary before releasing offenders into the community for the welfare of both the offender and the community at large.⁵³

Conclusion

Black religion provides for a black theology which speaks equally to the physical, spiritual, sacred and secular needs of black people. Eurocentric theologians had no incentive to articulate the need of a people struggling for liberation from their oppression. Black theology seeks to affirm the inherent worth of black people. It recognizes the dignity of black people even in diverse inhumane situations. It affirms God's providential care.⁵⁴

The language of black theology expresses the desires and convictions of an oppressed people. Through prayers, songs, sermons, poetry, and litanies there were stories told of black people. These narratives inspired hope. As a result of the experiences of the people, the theology was expressed in their own language.⁵⁵

Black theology also relates closely to biblical theology in that much of what is expressed in black religion is self-understanding. It is done in biblical language and is a part of black self-expression because they saw themselves and their experiences reflected in the scripture. It sees the gospel as supporting the quest for freedom. God is revealed as one who delivered Israel out of bondage and one whom they believed to deliver them.⁵⁶

⁵³ "Texas Offender Re-Entry Initiative."

⁵⁴ James H. Evans, Jr., "Black Theology," in *New Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 70.

⁵⁵ Evans, "Black Theology," 70.

⁵⁶ Evans, "Black Theology," 71.

In the epistle of Paul to Philemon, Paul appeals to Philemon and to the church in his house to accept the return of Onesimus his slave not as a run-a-way slave that caused grief to his master, but as a seasoned servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He announced that Onesimus, through the grace of God and the teaching of Paul, had become useful to society and to the household of faith. Just as one is forgiven of their sins, one should be willing to forgive and restore others. The gospel of love and forgiveness embraced by believers should in practice seek reconciliation for those who have strayed and nurture them back into the fold.

It is this writer's view that the love of God transcends all manner of human error. Therefore, restoration and renewal of body, mind and soul through the prevenient grace of God opens the way for the church to move toward the goal of saving the lost and helping to set the captives free. For ex-offenders, the struggle is for justice against a lifelong exile from participating in community life even though sentences have long since been served. The struggle is against legal discrimination in the workplace, thereby creating a permanent underclass and an increase in poverty. The Church seeks to help ameliorate the spiritual, social and economic situation of ex-offenders. The Church must be active in the struggle for liberation.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Citizens returning to society after incarceration encounter many obstacles that impede their progress in reentry. There are social, psychological, economic, educational and mental challenges associated with reentry. The problems ex-offender encounter are magnified by the lack of acceptance and society's propensity toward punishment. The community itself can be a serious stumbling block affecting chances for true integration and rehabilitation.

Dr. Samuel D. Proctor indicated that "when people have no functional relationship to the larger society and when their options are cut off, frustration builds. The time is then ripe for ideologues and false messiahs to emerge with fantasies about race, culture and destiny. Meanwhile illegal hustling, crime, suicide and homicide become the only game in town."¹

Reentry is defined as "the process of leaving prison and returning to society."² The process of transitioning from prison to community creates challenges for the individual and also for the community. Many prisoners leave unprepared for life outside

¹ Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995), 169.

² Jeremy Travis, Amy L. Solomon and Michelle Ward, *From Prison Home: Dimensions and Consequences of Reentry* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2001), 1.

of prison. In addition, prisoners are released without support or assistance to aid in their reintegration into society. Returnees are often unable to reconnect with jobs, housing and families. Some will continue to have issues with drug abuse and mental health problems. As a result, many will be rearrested and returned to prison for new crimes or parole violations.³ Recidivism, as it is called, has become a key indicator of criminal justice performance and relies on new arrest data on those returning to prison with new convictions.⁴

The social costs to reentry are far-reaching. There are weighty collateral consequences facing prisoner reentry including “public health risks, disenfranchisement, homelessness and weakened ties among families and communities.” The challenge of managing reentry so fewer crimes are committed is important to the ever increasing concern for public safety. Having fewer persons who return to prison would also represent a significant cost savings.⁵

Historically, many theories have been put forth concerning offenders. In the late 1800’s, criminologists sought to offer theoretical explanations for criminal behavior. The treatment of offenders can be traced to 18th century theorist Cesare Beccaria in *Essays in Crime and Punishment* published in 1764. He wrote that people chose to commit crime after weighing the benefits and costs of one’s actions, but that the fear of punishment would prevent people from acting on impulses. He expressed that the punishment should

³ Travis, Solomon and Ward, *From Prison Home*, 1.

⁴ Jeremy Travis and Christy Visser, eds., *Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5-6.

⁵ Travis, Solomon and Ward, *From Prison Home*, 1-2.

fit the crime and the person.⁶ To mete out proper punishment, positivist criminologists sought to study the body, mind and the environment of the offender. They hoped that this study would reveal the reason offenders committed crimes. They even looked at the possibility of successful rehabilitation of criminals.⁷ Joan Petersilia reported that:

The positivistic approach to crime and criminals—which viewed the offender as “sick” and in need of help—began to influence parole release and supervision. The rehabilitation ideal, as it came to be known, affected all of corrections well into the 1960’s and gained acceptance for the belief that the purpose of incarceration and parole was to change the offender’s behavior rather than simply to punish.⁸

However, biological and positivist theorist Cesare Lombroso proposed that some people were born criminals as a result of being in a primitive state of evolution. He proposed that criminals had physical traits that distinguished them from law-abiding citizens. Those identifying traits were canine teeth, huge jaws, and high cheek bones acquired through heredity, alcoholism, epilepsy or syphilis. Later the interest shifted to inherited traits from mentally defective ancestors that affected intelligence.⁹

More recently, Wilson and Herstein in *Crime in Human Nature* 1985, brought about renewed interest in biological predisposition for criminal activity. They proposed that genetic makeup, body type and intelligence quotient outweigh social factors as

⁶ George F. Cole and Christophe E. Smith, *The American System of Criminal Justice*, 9th (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thompson Learning, 2001), 68.

⁷ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 69.

⁸ Joan Petersilia, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61.

⁹ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 69.

predictors of criminality. They proposed that research on nutrition, neurology, genetics, and endocrinology support the idea that these factors may relate to violent behavior.¹⁰

Other theories seek to explain the process through which one becomes a criminal. The three process theories: the learning theory, the control theory, and the social reaction, assume that the potential to become a criminal is not limited to education, class or upbringing and looks to explain the processes of criminalization. The learning theory views criminal behavior as learned behavior through imitation of associates. One of the learning theories is that of differential association put forth by Edwin Sutherland which stated that “behavior is learned through interaction with others especially family members.”¹¹ There are two basic parts to Sutherland’s theory of differential association. The first is that the content of what is learned includes “specific techniques for committing crimes, appropriate motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes and more general definitions favorable to law violations. The second part is the process by which learning takes place and specifically involves association with other people.”¹²

The control theory introduced by Travis Herschi indicated that social links keep people in line even though they may have the potential to commit crime. They share values and beliefs in standards that restrain them. ¹³Attachment is the primary element necessary for a social bond. Commitment which is described as the stake one has in conformity is next in importance. It accentuates the investment made in conventional

¹⁰ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 70.

¹¹ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 73.

¹² George B. Vold, Thomas J. Bernard and Jeffrey B. Snipes, *Theoretical Criminology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185.

¹³ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 73.

society and the risk one takes if one participates in deviant behavior. The control theory focuses on involvement in conventional activities as a means of keeping busy, thus restricting opportunities for delinquent activities. Moral beliefs are disobeyed when one chooses to commit delinquent acts. One usually divests oneself of moral beliefs before choosing to commit crimes.¹⁴

The social reaction theory is also known as the labeling theory. Howard Becker theorized that labeling people as deviants creates criminals.¹⁵ The label of “criminal” overrides all other labels. Therefore the person is thought of first as a criminal. The criminal justice system plays a role in the process whereby the person must accept the “criminal self-image and status degradation.”¹⁶

In recent years, research on the process of offender reentry and their reintegration has sparked theoretical interests in crime desistance. Much research focuses on understanding aspects of crime desistance. It takes place when “external and internal variables align in such a way that an offender with a history of multiple offences ceases all criminal activity” This process varies based on individual agency, social structure and experience with criminal justice intervention, gender and ethnicity.”¹⁷

There are two theoretical representations in respect to desistance. There are offenders who suddenly and unexpectedly go straight and there are offenders who

¹⁴ Vold, Bernard and Snipes, *Theoretical Criminology*, 207-208.

¹⁵ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 73.

¹⁶ Vold, Bernard and Snipes, *Theoretical Criminology*, 222.

¹⁷ Elaine Gunnison and Jacqueline B. Helfgott, *Offender Reentry: Beyond Crime and Punishment* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 108-109.

steadily decline in offending behavior that would lead to recidivism. The following finding is significant:

Findings showing that ex-offenders maintain adherence to societal values even while persisting in committing illicit activities and then shift their behaviors and identification with significant (law-abiding) others in line with these values in the desistance process suggest that social control theories, rather than cultural deviance theories, explain crime desistance.¹⁸

Certain key events such as marriage, military service and employment have been found to be associated with desistance.

In addition, relocation to a new place of residence or neighborhood, and separation from prior context and community engagement increases self-control. Other influences were found that influence the success of ex-offenders:

personal conditions (such as mental health, substance abuse, physical health problems and lack of life skills and employment skills) social network/environment, accommodation, legal issues and experience in the criminal justice system, lack of rehabilitation and counseling, support (such as limited access to treatment and appropriate intervention, and employment and training support).¹⁹

Helfgott writes that research on ex-offender reentry and rehabilitation suggest that “an ex-offender is presented with a situation that is the antithesis of what they experienced while incarcerated and face considerable barriers in making their way from incarceration to community” The needs most identified by ex-offenders themselves have been social and community support. When given the opportunity to share their opinions on staying crime-free, many ex-offenders reported the following: “that success is challenged by internal barriers to change, such as social isolation, feeling of powerlessness, and lack of

¹⁸ Gunnison and Helfgott, *Offender Reentry*, 109.

¹⁹ Gunnison and Helfgott, *Offender Reentry*, 109.

control over their own actions, as well as legal issues and obstacles such as an inability to obtain financial aid.”²⁰ Examination of the offender from a phenomenological perspective found that the development of a prosocial identity and worthwhile employment or a new career path contributed to crime desistence. As positive self-conceptualization is actualized, a person’s past actions can be reinterpreted and talents refocused to adapt to future aspirations.²¹

Other theorist focused on the psychological factors related to crime. The idea that criminal activity was caused by mental defect or personality issues caused psychologist Henry Maudsley and Sigmund Freud to focus on the psychological explanations of crime. Maudsley theorized that criminals were morally insane. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory proposed that unconscious forces and drives caused people to commit crimes. People with uncontrollable impulses such as psychopaths, sociopaths, and antisocial personalities do not learn from experience or feel emotions such as love.²²

Psychological theories of criminality have influenced criminal justice policy. These theories implied that people with personality disorders needed to receive treatment and that punishment should be meted out to those with learned illegal behaviors so as not to reward crime. Rehabilitation to change the personality of offenders included “psychotherapy, counseling, group therapy, behavioral modification, and moral development programs.”²³

²⁰ Gunnison and Helfgott, *Offender Reentry*, 110.

²¹ Gunnison and Helfgott, *Offender Reentry*, 110.

²² Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 70-71.

²³ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 72.

Social-psychological interactionist theories focused attention on deviant identity by labeling and other processes that create stigma. It was identity transformation research that explored how self-images of offenders as law-abiding citizens are shaped in the manner similar to their social interaction with others in new pro-social rather than deviant roles. Offenders can change their public image from liability to asset by way of positive action.²⁴

Identity transformation makes it possible for offenders to reconstruct identities by interacting with others. When the ex-offender takes on roles in the family, in the workplace, and in the community, they get to produce these positive behaviors and identities that correspond to the new images. It is indicated that constructing a new identity as a person with something to contribute is that which distinguished those who act within the law from those who engage in illegal activities. One aspect of this new identity is willingness to help others through service, civic involvement, competent behavior and trustworthiness.²⁵

Sociological explanations stress that societal groups shape behavior. Social theorist Emile Durkheim argued “that when a simple rural society develops into a complex urbanized one, traditional standards decline. Some people are unable to adjust to the new rules and will engage in criminal acts.”²⁶ Durkheim analyzed anomie as a “breakdown in the ability of society to regulate the natural appetites of individuals.”²⁷

²⁴ Gordon Bazemore and Jeanne Stinchcomb, “A Civic Engagement Model of Reentry: Involving community through Service and Restorative Justice,” *Federal Probation*, 68, No 2, (September 2004): 15.

²⁵ Bazemore and Stinchcomb, “A Civic Engagement Model,” 16.

²⁶ Bazemore and Stinchcomb, “A Civic Engagement Model,” 116.

²⁷ Vold, Bernard and Snipes, *Theoretical Criminology*, 158.

Social theorists suggest that the influence of societal forces on criminal behavior is based on social structure. It suggests that criminal behavior is related to social class and variances in wealth. The lower class suffers from poverty, “poor education, bad housing, and lack of political power.” Thus the structure and society contribute to crime.²⁸

Robert Merton stresses that there are breakdowns in and disappearances of the rules or norms that guide social behavior. When rules are not clear or people are not able to achieve their goals, the result is antisocial or deviant behavior.²⁹ Merton argues that “many of the appetites of individuals are not natural but originate in the culture of American society:

... The social structure of American society limits the ability of certain groups to satisfy those appetites. The result is “a definite pressure on certain persons in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conducts.”³⁰

Social conflict theories “assume that criminal law and the justice system are designed to control the poor” who are more likely to be caught and punished even though the rich may commit just as many crimes. Persons who are in power often use the law to impose their version of morality on society and to protect their property and their safety. “They use their power to change the definition of crime to cover acts they view as threatening . . . and stop those who challenge the system.” An example was vagrancy laws which were used to arrest union organizers, civil rights workers and peace activists.

²⁸ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 72.

²⁹ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 72.

³⁰ Vold, Bernard and Snipes, *Theoretical Criminology*, 159.

As a result of these laws, the poor became hostile towards the social order which factors into their criminal behavior.³¹

There is a strong correlation between employment and incarceration. Sentencing laws adjust so that when unemployment goes up, so does incarceration and vice versa. Therefore the official unemployment rate is reduced by incarceration of the least employable. In addition, competition in a tight labor market is lessened. "Prisons have become warehouses for the poor and those addicted to drugs and alcohol, those who are mentally unstable, and those who have been unable (to) amass the human capital necessary to obtain sustainable employment."³² High unemployment gives reason to those in power to warehouse the underclass out of sight. The expanding relationship between prison and industry has created a high demand for incarceration whereby the underclass is exploited by multinational corporations, thus, fueling the growth of private prisons.³³

Questions have been raised concerning the sincerity of the U.S. government and big business in reducing rates of incarceration and promoting successful reentry. Instead they play a role in promoting and favoring the high rates of recidivism:

There are several institutions, namely the government and multinational corporations that have a vested interest in not reducing rates of incarceration or fostering successful reentry, but rather in maintaining and ever growing the prison system in the United States. We base this argument on three key issues: (1) the relationship between unemployment and incarceration, (2) the use of

³¹ Cole and Smith, *The American System*, 74.

³² Angela Hatterly and Earl Smith, *Prisoner Reentry and social capital: The long road to reintegration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 15.

³³ Hatterly and Smith, *Prisoner Reentry and social capital*, 14-16.

prisons as a strategy to cordon off the underclass and (3) the relationship between the prison and multinational corporations or what we term the Prison Industrial Complex.” or PIC.³⁴

Through whatever lens we choose to view reentry, we must not fail to realize that prisons produce their own culture which is contrary to the norms of society. Many persons arrive back into society indoctrinated in the culture of the prison. Included would be using language inappropriate to the social situation, or wearing of clothing in stereotypical prison style. In many instances persons who are sent to prison are already living on the fringe of societal norms.³⁵

Those who seek to extend help to returning citizens must be aware of the social isolation, alienation and contempt for authority that exist. There is the reality that the quality of life taken for granted in communities are not present for the offender. For many offenders, the standards and rules of the street code are all that is available. Those brought up alienated and without strong social support have internalized racist rejection and contempt for mainstream society. They spend much time and effort creating an “oppositional culture” which is included in the code of the street. “They do so to preserve their own self-respect in their own system. In this system, the black man has very little clout; to salvage something of value, he must outwit, deceive, and ultimately ‘end run’ the system.”³⁶

The severe entrenchment of alienation allows the oppositional culture to flourish. Among the youth, this culture gains strength and is legitimized by strong opposition to

³⁴ Hatterly and Smith, *Prisoner Reentry and social capital*, 14.

³⁵ Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), Kindle location 5236-5248.

³⁶ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 5236-5248.

the dominant society. “Those who experience contempt from society cannot freely enjoy self-respect without dishing out contempt in return” thus becoming further alienated from society.³⁷ There is a widely held assumption in some communities that the “police hold the black communities in low repute, therefore, the residents are alienated from the police and police authority.”³⁸

There is a common pattern that has immersed among incarcerated black men: “growing up in single-parent households (not always female); coping with boredom; being exposed to values and behaviors emphasizing toughness and a blatant disregard for authority; losing interest in school and eventually dropping out; selling drugs (and viewing it as an acceptable means of income and work); choosing the wrong friends; and being at the wrong place at the wrong time when something went awry.”³⁹ The culprit in most cases, Reeves explains, was damaged decision-making abilities. He cites Dr. Milton Burglass proposing that the “majority of inmates lack the skills to set and prioritize goals and to consider the gains, risk and long-term consequences of their actions.” They are lacking in the ability to “think ahead, plan for the future and repress impulses.” Instead they simply “react to life rather than stopping to choose how they want their lives to be.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 5330-5342.

³⁸ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 5376.

³⁹ Keith Reeves, “Finding A Lazarus,” in *Ministry with Prisoners and Families: The Way Forward* eds. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Charles E. Lewis, Jr. and Harold Dean Trulear, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 51.

⁴⁰ Reeves, “Finding A Lazarus,” 51.

Burglass developed a motivational program which taught inmates the following six essential steps to effective decision-making: “(1) define situation, (2) set goals, (3) develop possibilities for reaching those goals, (4) evaluate these possibilities and explore the alternatives, (5) decide on a course of action, and (6) stay focused until one’s goals are achieved.” Burglass wrote that a person’s image of himself/herself in relation to the society strongly influenced his/her actions. By learning to problem solve and make better decisions clients raised their self-esteem which enables them to be more productive upon returning to the community.”⁴¹

Lonnie McLeod relates that reentering society after serving a prison sentence is a “more complex social process than churches and individuals realize.” Most ministers generally focus on what psychologist Abraham Maslow refers to as the “primary needs” of food, clothing and shelter. However, more than these basic requirements are needed to help with integration into the community. He relates that “most persons returning from prison have never been full participants in mainstream society. Many persons entered into prison after being in foster care and the juvenile justice system.”⁴²

It is important to note that there is transitional trauma associated with returning citizens to society resulting from the socioeconomic and cultural dislocation from mainstream society. Emile Durkheim describes the condition as the “absence of socially accepted norms and values.” The persons who are caught up in the criminal justice system usually never have a clear idea of what society determines to be right and wrong

⁴¹ Reeves, “Finding A Lazarus,” 51-52.

⁴² Lonnie McLeod, “A Holistic Approach to the Trauma of Reentry,” in *Ministry with Prisoners and Families: The Way Forward*, eds W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Charles E. Lewis, Jr., and Harold Dean Trulear (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 129-130.

or good and evil. Their “lifestyles reflect a form of pragmatism that judges the appropriateness of an action based solely on their own desire after disregarding or being oblivious to the ways others are affected by their behavior.”⁴³

For returning citizens released into freedom without a moral compass, it is very traumatic, especially when facing the barriers that already exist to make it hard to assimilate and integrate socially into mainstream society. Durkheim found that the “transitional trauma” and the inability to integrate socially into meaningful participation in the social order can lead to social suicide and the reenactment of criminal lifestyle.⁴⁴

McLeod purports that the returning citizen “needs a new system into which they can enter as a part of their return to society. The personal care expressed in a community of believers can restore trust and relationship.” Connection to or in a group eases the trauma experienced by returning offenders.⁴⁵

The issue of public safety is of grave concern for communities. Todd Clear wrote in his article “The Impact of Incarceration on Public Safety” that he assessed five levels of social impact on public safety. These were: (1) the effects on individuals that changed the way people act, (2) the effects on intimate relationships such as those with families and other loved ones, (3) the effects on social relationships that are felt as community level outcomes, (4) the effects on institutions such as labor markets and the political economy and (5) the effects on democracy or social justice.⁴⁶

⁴³ McLeod, “A Holistic Approach,” 130.

⁴⁴ McLeod, “A Holistic Approach,” 130.

⁴⁵ McLeod, “A Holistic Approach,” 134-36.

⁴⁶ Todd R. Clear, “The Impacts of Incarceration on Public Safety,” *Social Research*, 74: no. 2 (Summer 2007): 614.

The desire for public safety included the need for low crime rates. However, Clear remarked that there was a profound interest in living in a society where one could feel secure to pursue personal goals and fulfill one's life desires. For this reason, it is necessary to consider how incarceration affects the quality of life by viewing the way incarceration affects informal social relations which promote social control.⁴⁷

Incarceration removes people from places for a period and then returns them to those or other places having been changed by having experienced confinement. In this cycle, one usually thinks only of the removal of a criminally active person from the community with little thought given to the return and the fact that the cycling process repeats multiple times for many. As a result, much of the social impacts of incarceration stems from the cycling process.⁴⁸ Such a vast number of those persons who are recycled through the criminal justice system will return to resource deficient communities⁴⁹

On the individual level, the social effects of incarceration are viewed as incapacitation and rehabilitation, the prevention of crime or the change in a person that he no longer commits crime. "Incapacitation is limited because people are criminally active before going to prison and have usually already gathered a past record of crimes." Thus the amount of crime prevented presents a diminishing return. Rehabilitation studies show that the programs held in prison are less effective than those held in the community.⁵⁰ It

⁴⁷ Clear, "The Impacts of Incarceration," 614.

⁴⁸ Clear, "The Impacts of Incarceration," 614-615.

⁴⁹ E. Ann Cason, "Prisoners in 2013" in the *Bulletin of U. S. Department of Justice Programs Bureau of Statistics* 1-3. (September 2014), NCJ 247282, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.djp.usdoj.gov> 2.14

⁵⁰ Cason, "Prisoners in 2013," 616-617.

also has been found that criminal activity may be amplified by incarceration. Some studies on reentry effects on crime have reported that crime the rate at the neighborhood level, and the number of people returning to a neighborhood from prison is a direct predictor of the crime rate in that place.⁵¹

Clear purports that intimate relationships are affected by incarceration based on how meaningful and mutually supportive the relationships are including those required to nurture and socialize children. “Studies show that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to be depressed than other kids, experience greater difficulty in school, and demonstrate a range of behavior problems including delinquency.” Incarceration was also shown to have a negative impact on marriages.⁵²

The epidemiologists have noted that there is a relationship between the levels of incarceration and the increase in sexually transmitted diseases. The rise in chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea and AIDS in high incarceration areas come as results of the movement of men in and out of confinement. This movement destabilizes sexual relationships.⁵³

At the community level, public safety is represented by a “collective efficacy” which includes a sense of civic interconnectedness and a shared destiny. Places that have public safety are places where there is a proliferation of social participation and civic involvement. “People who live in the community invest their time in these places and care about maintaining them. If people go to prison, there should be respect for the law,

⁵¹ Cason, “Prisoners in 2013,” 617.

⁵² Cason, “Prisoners in 2013,” 619.

⁵³ Cason, “Prisoners in 2013,” 619.

less fear of crime and a sense of social cohesion” Clear also reports however that these effects exist more in abstract theorizing than in on-the-ground reality. Some research shows that there is a greater fear of crime in places where there are a large number of people who go to prison.⁵⁴

The effects of incarceration on institutions such as the labor market and political economy are that they create an idea of strong public safety. People engage more freely in commerce when the public sees laws being enforced and institutions appear to be more credible. In terms of a democratic society, “public safety is tied to equity, social justice, and human dignity. There is a link between the paralyzing effect of crimes and the way prison might contribute to the amount of crime. Without prisons however, democratic life would be unimaginable.”⁵⁵

Mass incarceration is another phenomenon to consider. In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander focuses on the trend toward mass incarceration of young black males. This mass incarceration has provided for the creation of a system which “stigmatized a racial group of people and locks them into an inferior position by law and custom: a racial caste.”⁵⁶ The system of mass incarceration “permanently locks a huge number of the African American community out of the mainstream society and economy.”⁵⁷ Once labeled a felon, an ex-offender is legally discriminated against in the job market and barred permanently from public housing and public benefits. These types

⁵⁴ Cason, “Prisoners in 2013,” 620.

⁵⁵ Cason, “Prisoners in 2013,” 623.

⁵⁶ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), 12.

⁵⁷ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 13.

of legalized discriminatory acts create a “parallel social universe,” much like Jim Crow, in which social, political and economic capital gains have been nullified.⁵⁸

Offenders face continued punishment after leaving prison. Jeremy Travis termed this treatment as “invisible punishment.” It is a punishment that operates outside the public view. He describes these actions as “criminal sanctions” that begin when offenders leave prison grounds. These sanctions have a greater impact on the person’s life than the time spent behind bars. Such actions are meant to insure that the vast majority of convicted offenders never integrate into the main society.⁵⁹

The invisible punishment imposed on felons when they are released from prison outweighs the physical bondage they experienced. This type of punishment erases all hope of the person integrating into society. The undisclosed sanctions imposed on ex-offenders beyond the stated sentences create impassable barriers.⁶⁰

Policy changes in Congress have also created harsh penalties. Some felons are barred from voting, receiving food stamps, having access to public housing. Students with drug offenses are not able to get financial aid because of their imprisonment. The impact of some of these policies was irrational and counterproductive especially when a three time armed robber could get food stamps but a drug offender could not. The prohibition on student loans for higher education would affect student disproportionately

⁵⁸ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 191-192.

⁵⁹ Jeremy Travis, *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prison Reentry* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press, 2005), 63-65.

⁶⁰ Mark Mauer, “The Color Line: Some punishment begin after prison,” *The Crisis* (May/June 2003): 16.

from lower income families. These penalties were more likely to be experienced by people of color.⁶¹

The idea that people paid their debt to society has been eroded by lifetime bans and disenfranchisement laws. “The invisible punishments for crimes policy serve no legitimate function in the justice system but to create substantial barriers to former offenders attempting to re-establish themselves to the community. Policy makers who believe they are really sending a message about deterrence are really sending a message that some persons will always be second-class citizens. This is hardly an effective way to assure public safety or achieving the promise of a democratic society.”⁶²

The subsequent release of prisoners back into their communities poses two basic interrelated challenges. The first is protecting safety of the public. The second challenge would be fostering the individual’s transition from a life in prison to life as a productive citizen.⁶³

In conclusion, it is revealed through the range of theories that incarceration has deleterious effects on offenders. The reasons for criminal behavior might be physical, psychological, social or a combination thereof. Economic reasons are apparent from the lack of employment and education. All studies emphasize the need for community support.

Studies have shown that many persons returning from prison have never been full participants in mainstream society. The job of retrofitting offenders for a place in

⁶¹ Mauer, “The Color Line,” 16-17.

⁶² Mauer, “The Color Line,” 17.

⁶³ Travis, Solomon and Ward, *From Prison Home*, 1.

mainstream society is even more complex. Neutralizing the effects of stigma and labeling must be accomplished as well as enhancing the level of self-esteem. Ex-offenders must recognize that staying connected to positive, supportive groups or individuals is vital to successful reentry. Moreover, much effort and perseverance is required to overcome the mountainous obstacles faced by individuals who are pursuing successful reentry.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research project is based on the current reality that many persons are released from prison into our communities. These persons are stigmatized and cast off. Many have problems that require intervention (i.e. mental health, substance abuse, anger, education, psychological, economical). This project is based on the belief that the faith community has a biblical mandate to give support to persons reentering society after being incarcerated.

The hypothesis of this research project centers on the measurement of local church and community members' attitudes, perceptions and feelings toward ex-offenders and the impact of having knowledge and information about ex-offenders and programs that assist them. Moreover, the hypothesis involves the willingness to be involved in church programming focusing on supporting ex-offenders reentering the local community. This study of reentry and recidivism contributes to existing literature on attitudes, perceptions, and feelings toward ex-offenders in that it focuses specifically on these judgments made by members of the faith-based community. Harold Garfinkel held that stigmatizing attitudes vary inversely with exposure to the stigmatized group. Garfinkel hypothesized that stigmatizing attitudes toward the officially labeled group

vary in proportion to the degree of confidence in the sanctioning agency or process.¹ In 2010, Hirschfield and Piquero, in their study, examined the hypotheses of Harold Garfinkel and Ervin Goffman together, focusing on exposure to ex-offenders and confidence in the criminal justice system. They found that knowing people who have been incarcerated reduces stigmatizing attitudes and was consistent with research on community attitudes about other stigmatized groups, and low confidence in the criminal justice system tends to reduce the stigma of incarceration.²

It is believed that fostering positive and wholesome relationships and obtaining spiritual guidance through fellowship with the church would decrease the rate of recidivism and restore the dignity of these person. The goal of this project is to ascertain the attitudes of the members of Bethel-St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church and the community at large toward mentoring and providing support to ex-offenders.

Intervention

The context of the research project is Bethel-St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church, located in Waycross, Georgia, a town of approximately 14,649³ in Ware County. It was observed that one lady, who later joined the church, had a heart for ex- offenders and began inviting ex-offenders to attend the church. Many of these visitors

¹ Harold Garfinkel, "Conditions of successful degradation ceremonies." *American Journal of Sociology*, 61:420-24. 1956, quoted in Paul Hirschfield and Alex Piquero, "Normalization and Legitimation: Modeling Stigmatizing Attitudes Toward Ex-offenders," *Criminology*, 48, no.1 (2010): 27-55.

² Paul Hirschfield and Alex Piquero, "Normalization and Legitimation: Modeling Stigmatizing Attitudes Toward Ex-offenders," *Criminology*, 48, no.1 (2010): 27-55.

³ US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts - Waycross, Georgia," accessed September 4, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/1380956.html>.

were family members and others were persons who were in need of prayer, support and encouragement.

In order to prepare the members of the church to be accepting of persons who had spent time in jail/prison, a sermon series was presented focusing on the subjects of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. There were specific elements that were essential to developing this model. These sermons were delivered from February through March 2015. The sermons generated favorable comments from the members. The first sermon in the series was “Let Us Love One Another.” The text for this sermon was 1 John 4:7-8 “⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” The sermon focused on loving others as an indication that we love and know God. (See Appendix B).

The second sermon in the series was entitled “Forgiveness is Divine.” The text of the second sermon was Matthew 18:21-22. “²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.” The focus of this sermon was to emphasize the importance of forgiveness and the consequences of being unforgiving (See Appendix B).

The third sermon in the series was entitled “Another Chance to do the Right Thing.” The text was Philippians 3:12-14. “¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press

on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” This sermon focused on the need to move forward regardless of the issues in our past.

The theme in this sermon series speaks specifically to the need of the faith community to be more understanding of the mandate to love those who are on the margins of society as well as the people that are near to our own lifestyles.

A bible study was also conducted utilizing the biblical foundation scriptures in Jeremiah 31: 1-6 to show how God promised to restore Israel after the falling away. The epistle to Philemon was used to show the relation to God’s forgiving and receiving mankind to himself and to mankind’s directive to be willing to do the same for others. God is love and his love must flow through one to another (See Appendix C).

Another aspect of this model was to interview members of the criminal justice system to become familiar with those who administered justice in the community. Superior Court Judge Michael D. DeVane, was quite welcoming of the idea that someone in the community was willing to put forth the effort to engage the community in working in the area of reentry (See Appendix D). The Chief Parole Officer, Chuck Chancey, agreed that the community was in need of some group to provide help to eliminate the revolving door that so many offenders enter. Some of whom could operate outside of jail with help and encouragement (See Appendix E). The Probation officer, Chris Gonzales, emphasized that the job of probation officers is to enforce the rule of probation (See Appendix F). The County Sheriff, Randy Royal, indicated that his facility housed all of those arrested in the city and county before and after arraignment, trial and sentencing. He also reported a great degree of recidivism (Appendix G).

Research Design

This project uses mixed methodology which obtained both qualitative and quantitative data. In using triangulation, a pre-survey (See Appendix H), a post-survey (See Appendix I) and a questionnaire (See Appendix J) were used as a means of data collection. The mixed method approach as indicated by Creswell combined the use of both the qualitative and the quantitative forms of research. He asserts that the qualitative method gives voice to understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to social problems. This method of research necessitates collecting data in the person's own environment and interpreting that data.⁴

Furthermore, Creswell reports that the mixed method approach "bases the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone."⁵ This process of research involves beginning with a broad survey in order to obtain generalized results.

Measurement

The goal of the project was to engage the faith community in ministry to ex-offenders. The process involved ascertaining the attitudes of the faith community in providing support to persons upon reentry. It was necessary to get insight from the members of Bethel-St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as the larger

⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), 14.

⁵ Creswell, *Research Design*, 19.

community. Collaboration between the church, the community and the judicial system and law enforcement persons is deemed essential for the program to proceed.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for the project were pre-survey and post-survey and a questionnaire designed especially for this project. Before a project of this nature can be implemented, it is necessary for participants to be willing to work with ex-offenders. Therefore, it was necessary to determine the attitude of the community concerning persons who had previously been incarcerated. There was also a need to determine if the faith community had a desire to help ex-offenders who were in need of support. As a result of the feedback obtained from the pre-survey and post-survey and the questionnaire, it became apparent that there was an urgent need in Waycross for a program intended to minister to ex-offenders in this community. The need to include ex-offenders in wholesome activities and foster relationships is vital to building spiritual and moral sensitivity.

Summation

Professional associates included in this research were Reverend Dr. Bernard Clarke and Reverend Dr. Kathleen Joseph, both UTS graduates of the doctor of ministry program, and Judge Michael DeVane, Superior Court Judge of Waycross. Each of them gave encouragement and spiritual guidance in the development of this project. They provided insight as to the worth of such a project in light of the ministry to ex-offenders and the need for the faith community to become change agents, exhibiting the love of a caring and forgiving God.

Some context associates assisted with research design and implementation. The Reverend Linda Slaughter-Titus has a Master of Divinity degree from UTS and is an elder in the United Methodist Church. She assisted in the development and review of questions for the surveys and the questionnaire. The Reverend Tawanna Boyd, who has a Master of Divinity degree, is an elder in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She assisted in the development and review of correspondence.

Other context associates helped plan and execute of the Reentry Support Forum. The planning began February 12, 2015 with our first context group meeting which was held at Greater Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Waycross. An explanation of the project was given by the researcher. Reverend Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr. addressed the group on the biblical foundation for ministry to offenders. He explained to the context associates their role in planning and implementing the project. A refreshing meal was served to our participants. After this initial meeting, we met each of the following Thursdays (February 19 and 26, March 12, 19, and 26, April 9 and 23). At the February 19th meeting, we formulated a plan to first agree on a date and then find a place to accommodate the meeting. It was decided that April 25, 2015 would give us time to contact the presenters and the people to be invited. Rev. Titus took on the responsibility to get the name of churches in the area. We sent a letter to 140 churches inviting them to send a representative to the Forum. Mrs. Pamela Smith, a context associate, took on the responsibility of locating and contacting some of the presenters including Mayor Clarence Billups, Parole Officer Chuck Chancey and Sheriff Randy Royal.

Once a location was secured, the focus shifted to making sure the facility could accommodate all of the needs. Dr. Andrew Jackson agreed to ensure that we had a functioning public address system for the meeting. Mrs. Yolanda Hill agreed to coordinate registration along with Ms. Joyce Berry Sams and Ms. Rosa Douglas. Mrs. Yolanda Hill provided welcome packets. Mr. Marvin Atkins and Mr. Guy Harris helped with the planning and logistics. Reverend Tawanna Boyd and Rev. Linda Titus served as facilitators for the forum. All of these individuals served as context associates. For a complete list of stakeholders, professional associates and context associates see Appendix N.

Field Project

Project Seminar

A forum consisting of a panel of representatives from the local Sheriff's Department, the Courts, the Corrections Department, and community was held on April 25th at the Quality Inn Hotel (meeting room) in Waycross, Georgia. Attendees were invited from a total of 140 local area churches, religious and community organizations. There were over seventy persons in attendance. Panel members provided the group information related to their program or role in the criminal justice system and how ex-offenders are connected to their work. Presentations by the panel were followed by a question and answer session that allowed attendees and panel members to openly and candidly discuss their experiences and clarify how the faith community can support ex-offender reentry success.

After the welcome, Mayor Clarence Billups conveyed official greetings from the City of Waycross and the City Commission. “We are rebuilding lives,” he said, “we are people of faith... helping each other.”⁶ He admonished the group to show brotherly/sisterly love and help people rebuild their lives.

Reverend Carolyn Shorter introduced herself, gave an overview of the project and introduced the panel. Seminar participants were given an opportunity to introduce themselves. They shared their credentials and interest in reentry.

The Reentry Forum was divided into three sessions. Session One was titled “Reality Check: The Truth About Reentry.” Session Two was titled “The Journey and the Need.” Session Three was titled “Biblical Mandate.”

Judge DeVane re-emphasized the need for rebuilding lives. He explained to the audience that he manages the Waycross Criminal Courts and that there are four judges assigned to this region. He indicated that there was a significant back log of cases however his office is making progress. He realizes that justice needs to be swift. “Persons incarcerated need to get their time served and get on back out there and become productive. A person charged with an offense waiting on a trial or probation revocation needs a timely hearing. I’m pushing and others are pushing to try to move the things along and become more efficient with it.”⁷ Judge DeVane indicated that from his perspective, there are so many lives that are just practically destroyed, but there is always

⁶ Clarence Billups, “Greetings and Encouragement Speech,” “Reentry Support Forum,” Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

⁷ Michael DeVane, “Untitled Presentation,” “Reentry Support Forum,” Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

hope for those people if we can give them that helping hand. He indicated that much of Ware County's court backlog is due to recidivism. He stated:

While trying to reduce that backlog and deal with the problems in our community, I see men and women called up. And you know we used that term revolving door. But it is most certain a revolving door of arrest and then court appearance and then jail or prison, then release, then arrest again and on and on it goes. I have lived here since 1982, been a prosecutor for many years, and saw many people. Then I became a judge, and I just see the folks that were before me in court as a prosecutor and they just continue to be in that revolving door, names are so familiar, there are so many of them. It is so hard to break that cycle but it can be done. With God's help and our hard work it can be done (See Appendix D).⁸

Judge DeVane stayed at the Forum for the entire length of time and was very engaging.

He communicated his support for the involvement of the faith community to help prevent recidivism.

Parole Officer Chuck Chancey spoke during Session One. He shared that part of parole is reentry into the community. He pointed out that his job as the parole officer is to provide effective supervision for individuals once they are released from prison. He noted that from his perspective, when individuals get out of prison, the first thing they do is proclaim never to return. However, when asked what their plan was to stay out, they indicated that they had no plan. It becomes clear that you are working with a person with no plan for their future, limited education, limited work experience, and/or alcohol and drug issues, along with mental health issues. He likened probation to the adage "it takes a village to raise a child:" thus it takes a community, mom, dad, grandma, and others to help an ex-offender get through parole.

⁸ Michael DeVane, "Untitled Presentation."

He found that those persons who came in and really wanted to comply with the terms of their parole were the ones who had some kind of support system at home and contacts in the community to help them get a job. “The others are two types (1) those who get bad reports such as testing positive for drug usage and technical violation and (2) those who are found to pose a threat to themselves and to the community. The issue is that many times you see the same people over and over.”⁹ He indicated that it is hard to break that cycle especially when once they are released and go back into the community, there might be a drug dealer saying come over here; the first one is on me. It is so easy to fall back into that environment (See Appendix E).

Session Two, “The Journey and the Need” featured Minister Samuel Sellers who shared his personal journey. After greetings, he began with the scripture: “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge” (Hos.4:6). He continued, “But if you are here today to obtain knowledge as I share my experience with you, I believe when we leave here today, we will leave here with a better understanding of what we need to do, what God is calling us to do right here in Waycross.”¹⁰

Minister Sellers continued: “I was raised in a house with single parent. My mother raised me and my two brothers and a sister. I was taught how to work. I worked all the time, my whole life. During school, I missed twenty days. I worked all night long. I was not really dumb. The fact is that I was always working. I got married about the age of twenty-seven and got hurt on the job. Workers comp took about six months to pay; the bills kept piling up; I had a baby and got on food stamps. Thank God for food stamps. But I was forced, I say I was forced, that’s just a way of trying to make it sound good. I got out in the world and started selling drugs because I felt I had to take care of my family. The world says this is what I have to do. So I made one mistake in my life. Let’s put it the way the bible puts it; and it says we have all sinned. So if you looking down on me, you are

⁹ Chuck Chancey, “Untitled Presentation,” “Reentry Support Forum,” Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

¹⁰ Samuel Sellers, “Personal Testimony,” “Reentry Support Forum,” Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

looking down on yourself. A lot of people have committed crimes before but just did not get caught.”¹¹

This was a powerful testimony. It provides an example of how anyone can make a mistake but still take steps to improve their life.

Minister Sellers founded Upper Room Ministries where he and his wife mentor teenagers. He also is an entrepreneur and has hired several persons who have been incarcerated. He brought two adolescent males to the Forum. He shared that they were two of eleven children with four different stepfathers. Each of these men, including the youths’ father were killed on the streets of Miami, Florida. Their mother brought them from Miami to the Waycross, Georgia area hoping they could have a better life. Almost everyone in the forum, including the presenters, were moved by this story. Seller said, “They left Miami to come looking for a safe place, a safe environment. And 99 % of all our kids have no father. What road would they take? I grew up without a father and I ask myself who’s leading them who’s teaching them to steer them away from going into prison (See Appendix O).”¹²

Sheriff Royal discussed his role as keeper of the jail for Ware County. He explained that he had a 500 bed facility and as of today there were approximately 350 inmates. Also, he noted that no one knew better than he the revolving door system that exists. He was discouraged to see so much talent wasted. He suggested that there are those who belong in jail and the community is safer with them in jail. However, he noted that there are those who get caught in between. He stated:

¹¹ Samuel Sellers, “Personal Testimony.”

¹² Samuel Sellers, “Personal Testimony.”

As keeper of the jail, my hands are limited to a certain extent. I am bound by some writ or directive that command me to hold a person until the court says otherwise. But I'm willing to do anything I can to share about a good inmate. Yesterday I spoke about a good inmate; we speak to the extent that we can without violating ex- parte communications. We talk about inmates, those that really need and would be safe to be released. Judge Gibson too realizes that we cannot warehouse everybody. There has to be another way. Turning people around or at least putting them on the right track with the right support once they leave jail or prison is something that everyone should work toward (See Appendix G).¹³

Next was the question and answer period. The panel consisted of Judge Michael DeVane, Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Parole Officer Chuck Chancey, Sheriff Randy Royal, Probation Officer Chris Gonzales, Minister Samuel Sellers, Cindy Hampton, and Rev. Carolyn Shorter. Participants were able to query any member of the panel.

Dr. Cummings' power point presentation was titled, "Biblical Foundation for Prison Ministry: A Ministry of Reentry." As the starting point, Dr. Cummings addressed Dr. Howard Thurman's poignant question in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*, "What does the religion of Jesus have to say to those who live with their backs up against a wall." "As people of faith there are categories of people who live with their backs up against a wall. Numbered among these person are those who are incarcerated. Many of the handicaps and the hardships that they face are lack of education, no skills, addiction and mental health issues and a list that continues."¹⁴ Dr. Cummings gave the biblical foundations from both the Old and New Testaments of how people of faith can provide help to incarcerated individuals and to those who are facing reentry (See Appendix P).

¹³ Randy Royal, "Untitled Presentation," "Reentry Support Forum," Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

¹⁴ Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., "Biblical Foundation for Prison Ministry: A Ministry of Reentry." "Reentry Support Forum," Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

Dr. Cummings concluded his presentation by showing a video clip titled: “How Two Bitter Enemies Became Friends.”¹⁵

Dr. Cummings added the following:

“Each one, teach one is an African American proverb. This phrase originated in the United States during slavery when the Africans (and their offsprings) were denied education including how to learn how to read. When a slave learned or was taught how to read, it became his or her duty to teach someone else thus inspiring the phrase, each one, teach one. What would happen in this society if there was a movement among churches where each church reached one or each church sponsored one (a person reentering society)? The whole idea is that we have resources that have not been tapped. It is my prayer that by the help of the Holy Spirit, we shall continue to move forward.”¹⁶

The Forum concluded with Rev. Titus giving a summary of the day’s presentations and encouraging those in attendance to take what they heard (and learned) and put it into practice in their faith community. At this point post-test surveys (See Appendix I) and questionnaires (See Appendix J) were distributed to the participants for completion. This was followed by the host pastor, Rev. Shorter, thanking everyone for their presence and participation. Rev. Fer-Rell Malone gave the closing prayer.

Data and Methods

A mixed methodology was used yielding both qualitative and quantitative data in this project. A pre-survey was administered at the start of the forum and a post-survey was administered following the question and answer portion of the forum. This survey

¹⁵ “How Two Bitter Enemies Became Friends,” CBS News – Video, <http://www.cbsnews.com/how-two-bitter-enemies-became-friends>.

¹⁶ “How Two Bitter Enemies Became Friends.”

draws from the Attitudes toward Prisoners (ATP)¹⁷ scale. This gives a measure of negative stereotypes, internal and external attributions of responsibility, and anticipated social acceptance/distance relative to prisoners. On a five-point Likert scale with 1=Strongly Agree and 5=Strongly Disagree, forum attendees responded to the following items on the pre and post survey: (1) Most people who have been incarcerated are dangerous. (2) Most people who have been incarcerated are dishonest. (3) I would avoid associating with anyone who has recently been incarcerated. (4) Many people who are incarcerated do not deserve to be there. (5) Many people convicted of crimes in the courts are actually innocent. (6) It would be a big deal if one of my neighbors was incarcerated. (7) I have a great deal of respect for the police. (8) Overall, I think the police are honest. (9) I feel proud of the police. (10) I feel people should support the police. (11) The courts generally guarantee everyone a fair hearing or trial. (12) The basic rights of citizens are protected in the courts. (13) Overall, judges in the courts here are honest. (14) Court decisions here are almost always fair (See Appendix I).

Participants were also asked to report the number of people they knew personally or professionally who have been incarcerated, the prevalence of crime in their neighborhood and if they or a family member was ever a victim of a crime. Demographic data gathered included gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and if there were children under eighteen living in the home. In addition, forum attendees were asked to complete a reentry support questionnaire to further measure the impact of the forum and to gauge participants' willingness to support faith-based ex-offender ministry efforts in

¹⁷ Kenneth B. Melvin, Lorraine K. Grambling, and William M. Gardener "A scale to measure attitudes toward prisoners," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 12, no. 2 (June 1985): 241-53.

their own churches, religious organizations and groups. Responses to the Reentry Support Questionnaire were reverse coded on a five-point Likert scale with 1=Totally Disagree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Participants responded to the following items: (1) This forum was informative. (2) My understanding of the faith community's role in supporting reentry of offenders into the community was changed by this event. (3) I believe the faith community of Waycross should help ex-offenders with reentry into the community. (4) Attendees were asked to project the percentage of members at their church they feel would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders, ranging from 0-100 in increments of 25%. (5) I feel my pastor would encourage our congregation to minister to ex-offenders. (6) Attendees to identify the most helpful aspects of the forum. (7) Asked participants to identify areas they wished there had been more information. (8) Attendees were asked whether they are or are not willing to help start a mentoring/support ministry at their church. (9) Participants were asked to list obstacles to starting a reentry ministry at their church. (10) Attendees were asked for comments and questions. (See Appendix J).

Demographic

Although more were in attendance, thirty-seven forum participants completed the pre- and post-test surveys and the Reentry Support Questionnaire. The responding group was comprised of nineteen (51%) men and eighteen (49%) women. Twenty-eight (75.7%) were African American, one (2.7%) was Hispanic, four (10.8%) were white, and four (10.8%) respondents self-identified as other. There were five (13.5%) respondents with less than a high school education, two (5.4%) respondents had some high school, and two (5.4%) had a high school diploma. There were 10 (27%) respondents who had attended some college, seven (18.9%) were college graduates, and 11 (29.7%) had post

college education. Thirteen (35%) respondents had children under age eighteen living at home, compared to 24 (65%) with no children under age eighteen at home.

Results

The paired samples test was used to compare the means of responses given on the pre- and post-test surveys. Table 1 below is a list of the questions and item numbers that were compared from before and after the forum. These questions correspond to the pre- and post- output for the paired samples statistics shown in Table 2, the paired samples correlations in Table 3. and the paired samples test following in Table 4.

Table 1. PRE/POST FORUM SURVEY ITEMS

Number	Questions
Q1	Most people who have been incarcerated are dangerous?
Q2	Most people who have been incarcerated are dishonest?
Q3	I would avoid associating with anyone who has recently been incarcerated.
Q4	Many people who are incarcerated do not deserve to be there.
Q5	Many people convicted of crimes in the courts are actually innocent.
Q6	It would be a big deal if one of my neighbors was incarcerated.
Q7	I have a great deal of respect for the police.
Q8	Overall, I think the police are honest.
Q9	I feel proud of the police.
Q10	I feel people should support the police.
Q11	The courts are generally fair.
Q12	The basic rights of citizens are protected in the courts.
Q13	Overall, judges in the courts here are honest.
Q14	Court decisions here are almost always fair.

Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Q1 PRE	3.89	37	.936	.154
	Q1 POST	3.84	37	.986	.162
Pair 2	Q2 PRE	3.78	37	1.182	.194
	Q2 POST	3.86	37	.948	.156
Pair 3	Q3 PRE	4.24	37	1.038	.171
	Q3 POST	3.92	37	1.140	.187
Pair 4	Q4 PRE	2.70	37	1.222	.201
	Q4 POST	2.76	37	1.011	.166
Pair 5	Q5 PRE	2.89	37	1.308	.215
	Q5 POST	2.89	37	1.149	.189
Pair 6	Q6 PRE	3.65	37	1.060	.174
	Q6 POST	3.73	37	.990	.163
Pair 7	Q7 PRE	1.92	37	.924	.152
	Q7 POST	1.97	37	.928	.152
Pair 8	Q8 PRE	2.51	37	.932	.153
	Q8 POST	2.35	37	.919	.151
Pair 9	Q9 PRE	2.31	35	1.051	.178
	Q9 POST	2.29	35	.957	.162
Pair 10	Q10 PRE	2.03	37	.833	.137
	Q10 POST	1.97	37	.799	.131
Pair 11	Q11 PRE	2.95	37	1.224	.201
	Q11 POST	3.03	37	1.166	.192
Pair 12	Q12 PRE	2.89	37	1.149	.189
	Q12 POST	2.84	37	1.143	.188
Pair 13	Q13 PRE	2.49	37	.989	.163
	Q13 POST	2.41	37	.896	.147
Pair 14	Q14 PRE	3.16	37	1.143	.188
	Q14 POST	2.89	37	1.075	.177

Of the fourteen items tested, only two showed significant change informed by the forum.

Item 3 on the survey asked attendees if they would avoid associating with anyone who had recently been incarcerated.

Table 3. Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Q1 PRE & Q1 POST	37	.251	.134
Pair 2	Q2 PRE & Q2 POST	37	.593	.000
Pair 3	Q3 PRE & Q3 POST	37	.792	.000
Pair 4	Q4 PRE & Q4 POST	37	.794	.000
Pair 5	Q5 PRE & Q5 POST	37	.694	.000
Pair 6	Q6 PRE & Q6 POST	37	.542	.001
Pair 7	Q7 PRE & Q7 POST	37	.775	.000
Pair 8	Q8 PRE & Q8 POST	37	.821	.000
Pair 9	Q9 PRE & Q9 POST	35	.873	.000
Pair 10	Q10 PRE & Q10 POST	37	.878	.000
Pair 11	Q11 PRE & Q11 POST	37	.643	.000
Pair 12	Q12 PRE & Q12 POST	37	.895	.000
Pair 13	Q13 PRE & Q13 POST	37	.868	.000
Pair 14	Q14 PRE & Q14 POST	37	.738	.000

Table 4. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Q1 PRE - Q1 POST	0.054	1.177	0.194	-0.338	0.447	0.279	36	0.782
Pair 2	Q2 PRE - Q2 POST	-0.081	0.983	0.162	-0.409	0.247	-0.502	36	0.619
Pair 3	Q3 PRE - Q3 POST	0.324	0.709	0.117	0.088	0.561	2.782	36	0.009
Pair 4	Q4 PRE - Q4 POST	-0.054	0.743	0.122	-0.302	0.194	-0.442	36	0.661
Pair 5	Q5 PRE - Q5 POST	0	0.972	0.16	-0.324	0.324	0	36	1
Pair 6	Q6 PRE - Q6 POST	-0.081	0.983	0.162	-0.409	0.247	-0.502	36	0.619
Pair 8	Q8 PRE - Q8 POST	0.162	0.553	0.091	-0.022	0.347	1.782	36	0.083
Pair 9	Q9 PRE - Q9 POST	0.029	0.514	0.087	-0.148	0.205	0.329	34	0.744
Pair 10	Q10 PRE - Q10 POST	0.054	0.405	0.067	-0.081	0.189	0.813	36	0.422
Pair 11	Q11 PRE - Q11 POST	-0.081	1.01	0.166	-0.418	0.256	-0.488	36	0.628
Pair 12	Q12 PRE - Q12 POST	0.054	0.524	0.086	-0.121	0.229	0.627	36	0.534
Pair 13	Q13 PRE - Q13 POST	0.081	0.493	0.081	-0.083	0.246	1	36	0.324
Pair 14	Q14 PRE - Q14 POST	0.27	0.804	0.132	0.002	0.538	2.044	36	0.048

The mean response on the pre forum survey was 4.24 (sd=1.04) and the mean response on the post forum survey was 3.92 (sd=1.14). A significant change in response was found ($t(36)=2.78$, $p<.05$). Also, Item 14 which asked attendees whether court decisions are always fair showed significant change. The mean response on the pre forum survey was 3.16 (sd=1.14) and the mean response on the post forum survey was 2.89

(sd=1.08). A significant change in response was found ($t(36)=2.04$, $p<.05$). Although there was change in other responses to items on the pre forum survey compared to the post forum survey for some of the other items, it was not substantial enough to be considered statistically significant. Table 5 shows the percent change in agreement in responses from the pre forum survey compared to the post forum survey.

Table 5. Percent Change in Agreement

Item (n=37)	% Change Agree	% Change Disagree	% Change Neutral
Q1	2.7%	-2.7%	0.0%
Q2	-8.1%	-2.7%	10.8%
Q3	5.4%	-13.5%	5.4%
Q4	-27.0%	18.9%	8.1%
Q5	0.0%	-5.4%	5.4%
Q6	-8.1%	-2.7%	10.8%
Q7	0.0%	5.4%	-5.4%
Q8	-37.8%	-48.6%	0.0%
Q9	8.9%	-2.2%	-1.1%
Q10	5.5%	0.0%	-5.5%
Q11	-5.4%	0.3%	5.4%
Q12	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Q13	-2.8%	-5.4%	-16.2%
Q14	8.1%	-8.1%	0.0%

Data collected via the Reentry Support Questionnaire administered at the end of the forum indicated a general willingness of participants to support ex-offender focused ministries within their faith-based group. Thirty-three (88.9%) forum participants reported that the session was informative; twenty-three (67.6%) reported their understanding of the faith community's role in supporting reentry of offenders into the community was changed by the forum, and 100% held the belief that the faith community in the Waycross area should help ex-offenders with reentry into the community. There were eleven (30.6%) who felt that 100% of their church members would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders, seven (19.4%) who felt that approximately 75% of their church

members would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders, ten (27.8%) felt that about half of their church members would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders, another seven (19.4%) felt that 25% of their church members would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders and there was one (2.7%) who did not believe any church members would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders. Twenty-nine (78.4%) forum participants felt their pastors would encourage their congregation to minister to ex-offenders, and 28 (75.7%) of forum attendees indicated that they would be willing to help start a mentoring/support ministry at their respective churches. Obstacles to implementation and sustainability voiced during the forum question-and-answer period included lack of financial support/resources, lack of leadership for the initiative, unwillingness to support outreach ministry, and concern about the required time commitment.

Discussion

These findings are consistent with the hypothesis of this research project. Although significant change was shown in responses for only two pre/post forum survey items, the statistically significant difference in means specific to social avoidance (Item 3) and court system fairness (Item 14) are indicative of the forum's positive impact on participants' willingness to interact with ex-offenders and an increased understanding of justice system unfairness. Moreover, the results from the pre/post forum survey coupled with the positive responses on the Ex-offender Reentry Questionnaire suggest that, although some reservations exist, even after being presented with the information provided via the forum, there is an overall spirit of interest and willingness to engage and minister to ex-offenders reentering the community in local Waycross area faith-based settings and organizations.

Summary of Learning

As I reflect on the choice of ministry to ex-offenders, their plight upon returning to the community, and their bragging rights on having completed jail time, I realize that many were returning to a place to which they, for the most part, had not been connected and to which they had no hope of being connected. Needless to say, finding employment is difficult in general and limited opportunities exist even for those with a prison license in a trade. I realize that even ex-offenders need some place to feel safe and wanted. I have ex-offenders in my congregation now who would only sit on the back row that was flush with the back wall; however, as they felt truly welcome they were able to integrate themselves into the congregation.

We learned from law enforcement personnel who participated in the Forum that the need is great. The number of people going through the criminal justice system just in Waycross-Ware County is enormous and has overwhelmed the system and law enforcement would welcome help to prevent recidivism. The faith community must realize that the harvest is plenty but the laborers are few and accept the challenge to minister to this group of citizens.

It is my belief one cannot give to others what one does not have. It would be a travesty of justice to bring ex-offenders into places where love does not abound. Therefore, the first phase of the project began with sermons on love, forgiveness and second chances. I deemed it necessary to address the topic of love because it was an imperative from God that we love one another. How can we say we love God and not have love for one another? It is written in 1 John 4:20 (NRSV) that “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother

or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.” This first sermon on love was an essential beginning for the process of restoration and renewal. Jesus’ love was unconditional. The persons choosing to be a part of the team to mentor ex-offenders must realize the importance of love.

The questions that ensued were: “How do I love Mr. X or Mrs. Y after what they said or did to me?” How can I love a person who has robbed or killed? Having been barraged with numerous questions on forgiveness, the next sermon in the series focused on forgiveness. It is by forgiving that we ourselves are forgiven. Here too, we find this to be a biblical mandate. If we do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses (Matthew 6:15).

Forgiving the ex-offender allows the church to minister whole heartedly to the spiritual needs of the person and have a willingness to help with physical needs. It allows the church to be more gracious and inclusive in their quest to provide a welcoming atmosphere for receiving known ex-offenders into their midst. We accepted the reality that we cannot move forward ourselves with unforgiveness of any type in our hearts, thus thwarting the efforts of the group. Our God is One whose grace and mercy affords us second chances to do things right.

Therefore, the third and last sermon focused on the need for second chances. Many ex-offenders are deserving of a second chance for reconciliation. The church and the faith community in general must be willing to help those who want to mend their ways and find mentors and examples to give them spiritual guidance, provide avenues for spiritual healing, and help to enhance their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Becoming a repository of resources, the church can make a difference in the life of a

person seeking a second chance. Being a place of refuge where ex-offenders can come and fellowship without the eyes of judgement surveilling them constantly is a goal of the church.

The next phase of the project was to delve deeper into the areas of renewal and restoration through bible study. It was vital for our newly merged congregation, Bethel and St. Luke, to move from losing their autonomy as a church and develop oneness and togetherness. This was essential before we could be able to consider mentoring others. Thus, it is important to continue to study about love and forgiveness to assure that there would be unity among the members of the congregation, and so that love and forgiveness is projected to ex-offenders who worship with us. In addition, we studied instances in scripture, where people were given second chances. This sheds light on the fact that there are many ex-offenders who deserve a second chance. The church, operating as servants of God, should follow His lead on love, forgiveness, and giving second chances.

The researcher observed that after the focused sermons and bible study, there was an eagerness to participate displayed by the congregation at Bethel-St Luke AME Church. It was also observed that the climate and culture at Bethel-St Luke has begun to change for the better. The church was invigorated with a sense of urgency to extend help to others.

Another phase of the project was to administer the survey questionnaire. They were distributed to participants at the Reentry Forum to measure the attitude of the community towards ex-offenders. I learned that the community members surveyed agreed that action needed to be taken and were willing to move in that direction. With the

Likert Scale, we were able to maintain credibility of the survey and permit respondents to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric scale.

The researcher, through the Reentry Forum, was able to locate persons who were willing to collaborate with this effort to help ex-offenders. Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church of Waycross and Pastor Fer-Rell Malone have agreed to work toward creating a team, as well as Rev. Ralph C. Bess, pastor of Gaines Chapel AME Church, Rev. Tawanna Boyd, pastor of Austin Chapel CME Church, and Bishop Frances E. Fields, pastor of Faith Outreach Ministries. As a result of attending the Reentry Forum, Mrs. Pamela Smith has been inspired to move forward with her desire to start a transition house for ex-offenders. The researcher observed that this project sparked enthusiasm among forum participants to be a part of the collaborative model for restoration and renewal of ex-offenders to society.

Suggested Improvements for Future Projects

The participants in the Reentry Forum were very much engaged in the discourse concerning the need for further action on the plight of ex-offenders in our community. As a result of the Reentry Forum, it was noted there is a need to train teams from the churches on how to work with ex-offenders. Members of the group are planning to meet with leaders of programs in other areas to assess existing ministries. The group's goal is to meet with representatives from Prison Fellowship, Prisoners for Christ, Kairos and the Georgia Department of Corrections for assistance with moving the program forward.

It was also noted that consideration needs to be given to the fact that among the persons deemed ex-offenders returning to society are registered sex offenders. A future project or forum might center on the complications involved with working with felons

who are sex offenders when there are children, youth and vulnerable adults involved in the activities of the church. Training is needed on safe sanctuary policies and related procedures to create an environment in which there are boundaries of safe space to fellowship within the community of faith. Collaborative models for the restoration and renewal of ex-offenders to society might encompass these additions as well.

APPENDIX A
WAYCROSS CENSUS

Waycross (city), Georgia

People QuickFacts	Waycross	Georgia
Population, 2014 estimate	14,166	10,097,343
Population, 2013 estimate	14,224	9,994,759
Population, 2010 (April 1) estimates base	14,651	9,688,681
Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014	-3.3%	4.2%
Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013	-2.9%	3.2%
Population, 2010	14,649	9,687,653
Persons under 5 years, percent, 2010	8.3%	7.1%
Persons under 18 years, percent, 2010	26.0%	25.7%
Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2010	17.5%	10.7%
Female persons, percent, 2010	54.9%	51.2%
White alone, percent, 2010 (a)	40.7%	59.7%
Black or African American alone, percent, 2010 (a)	55.1%	30.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, 2010 (a)	0.3%	0.3%
Asian alone, percent, 2010 (a)	0.8%	3.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, 2010 (a)	Z	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent, 2010	1.8%	2.1%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2010 (b)	2.8%	8.8%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2010	39.6%	55.9%
Living in same house 1 year & over, percent, 2009-2013	78.5%	83.6%
Foreign born persons, percent, 2009-2013	3.6%	9.7%
Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2009-2013	6.3%	13.3%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013	78.1%	84.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013	15.0%	28.0%
Veterans, 2009-2013	1,022	690,208
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+, 2009-2013	17.4	27.0
Housing units, 2010	7,519	4,088,801
Homeownership rate, 2009-2013	52.7%	65.1%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent, 2009-2013	22.2%	20.5%

① Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2009-2013	\$66,100	\$151,300
① Households, 2009-2013	6,083	3,518,097
① Persons per household, 2009-2013	2.29	2.71
① Per capita money income in past 12 months (2013 dollars), 2009-2013	\$16,221	\$25,182
① Median household income, 2009-2013	\$24,779	\$49,179
① Persons below poverty level, percent, 2009-2013	32.7%	18.2%

Business QuickFacts	Waycross	Georgia
① Total number of firms, 2007	1,374	901,105
① Black-owned firms, percent, 2007	10.5%	20.4%
① American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned firms, percent, 2007	F	0.7%
① Asian-owned firms, percent, 2007	S	5.1%
① Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-owned firms, percent, 2007	F	0.1%
① Hispanic-owned firms, percent, 2007	F	3.6%
① Women-owned firms, percent, 2007	S	30.9%

① Manufacturers shipments, 2007 (\$1000)	D	144,280,774
① Merchant wholesaler sales, 2007 (\$1000)	741,184	141,962,359
① Retail sales, 2007 (\$1000)	556,550	117,516,907
① Retail sales per capita, 2007	\$37,638	\$12,326
① Accommodation and food services sales, 2007 (\$1000)	51,241	16,976,235

Geography QuickFacts	Waycross	Georgia
① Land area in square miles, 2010	11.71	57,513.49
① Persons per square mile, 2010	1,250.7	168.4
① FIPS Code	80956	13
Counties	<u>Pierce</u> <u>County</u> <u>Ware</u> <u>County</u>	

APPENDIX B
SERMON SERIES

First Sermon

Subject: Let us Love One Another

Text: 1 John 4:7-8

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Introduction: A mouse looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package; what food might it contain? He was aghast to discover that it was a mousetrap! Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning, “There is a mouse trap in the house, there is a mouse trap in the house.” The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, “Mr. Mouse, I can tell you this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me; I can’t be bothered.” The mouse turned to the pig and told him, “There is a mouse trap in the house.” “I am so very sorry Mr. Mouse,” sympathized the pig, “but there is nothing I can think of to do about it. Surely someone else will step in to help.” The mouse turned to the cow, who replied, “Like wow, Mr. Mouse, a mouse trap; am I in grave danger, Duh?” So the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected to face the farmer’s mousetrap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house, like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer’s wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see that it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer’s wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital. She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup’s main ingredient. His wife’s sickness continued so that friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the

pig. The farmer's wife did not get well; in fact, she died, and so many people came for her funeral the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat.

So the next time you hear that someone is facing a problem and think that it does not concern you, remember that when the least of us is threatened, we are all at risk.¹

It is important to realize that "All [people] matter. You matter. I matter."

Let us Love One Another

Is it really possible? Is it really possible? Is it really possible to love those who are not lovable? How is it possible to love those who do not like you? How is it possible to love those who do not want to be loved?

John makes a great pronouncement about God. "God is love." We remember that John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God has lavished his love on us. He overwhelms us with his warmth and joy. He wants us to love one another.

Application

"There once was a carpenter who did not overcharge for his work.

There was once a physician who healed the sick for free.

There was once a man who fed people at no charge.

And do you know what they did to Him?

They crucified Him!

There will be times as a Christ follower that you will feel unappreciated, and taken for

¹ David Ward, "Agapomen Allelus," 1, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://www.sermoncentral/sermons/agapomen.allelus-david-ward-sermon-on-jesus-teaching-60424.asp>.

granted. You will not feel loved as you should be.

When that happens, you should love others anyway.”²

How do we love others anyway? We can do this because God is love and because God has loved us, we have God’s love to give. God has put his love in us and it is God’s love that we share with others. Where God is, love is. If God lives inside the person, love must dwell there also, because God is love. By the same logic, if love lives in a person, God must live there. The Holy Spirit proves God lives in us.³

It was Saint Jerome who wrote that Saint John the Evangelist, while he was living in Ephesus in his extreme old age, had his disciples carry him to church. He did not have the strength for long speeches, therefore he would only say, “agapomen allelus” (“let us love one another”). The disciples and church members who were there got tired of him saying the same thing over and over, asked, “Master, why do you always say this?” He replied “Because it is the Lord’s command and if that alone is done, it would be enough⁴ So Church, what do you say?” **“Let us Love One Another.”**

Some sing, well, while others like the pastor make a joyful noise, what so you say?

Let us Love One Another

Some like to play Xbox and others PlayStation. What do you say? (Let us love one another).

Some people are sad; others are happy. What do you say? (Let us love one another).

Some drive Mercedes and others drive Fords. What do you say? (Let us love one.

² Ward, “Agapomen Allelus,” 2.

³ Ward, “Agapomen Allelus,” 2-3.

⁴ Ward, “Agapomen Allelus,” 3.

another).

Some young leaders have new ideas while others want to preserve our tradition. What do you say? (Let us love one another).

Some people talk about others and take sides. What do you say? **Let us Love One**

Another

Someone hurt us and we want to hurt them back. What do you say? **Let us Love One**

Another

Conclusion:

“⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Second Sermon

Forgiveness is Divine

Text: Matthew 18:21-18:35

What seems to be a mystery to Christians is that we must forgive one another.

Jesus was so adamant about the importance of forgiveness that he asked God to forgive the people who were crucifying Him, God’s Son. Forgiveness is divine.

Listen! The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. During the lesson, Jesus had them pray to God to forgive them their wrong doing, their debt, their trespasses just like they forgave the people who had done them wrong. Then Jesus continued by telling the disciples that if they did not forgive others, God could not forgive them. Forgiveness is divine. Read Matthew 6:14-15 and Mark 11:25-26.

In the scripture today, Jesus points to the importance of forgiveness as being part of loving each other. Jesus talked so much about forgiveness that Peter asked him, “Lord,

how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”

(Matthew 18:21). Peter knew that it was customary to forgive, even that you should forgive someone three times, but after the third time there was no forgiveness. So, Peter was surprised when Jesus said: “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21) Forgiveness is divine. You do the math. If you do the multiplication right, you will come out forgiving a lot of times; and by the time you finish, you will have forgotten what the problem was. Jesus demands this kind of forgiveness as well.

After Jesus made this what appeared to be an outrageous statement about forgiveness, he told the disciples a story about a man who owed a king millions of dollars. The king threatened to sell him and his whole family into slavery until the debt was paid, which of course he would never be able to do. This is sort of like having to pay the court probation fees without a job and being sent to jail because you cannot pay. In this case, the servant fell to his knees and begged the king for a chance to repay the debt. To his surprise, the king decided to cancel the whole debt and let him go. No probation, no parole, and no debt. He was free to go. Jesus tell us this story to show how God, deals with us. We have many sins, which we can never make right; but God forgives all our sins, releases us from all our debt, and frees us from our guilt and pain. God expects us to show grace and mercy to others. Forgiveness is divine.

The next part of the story is quite surprising. This same man meets a friend of his who owes him some money, not nearly as much as he owed the king. But can you guess what he did. He forgot all about how nice he was treated by the king and demands the debt be repaid immediately. The friend falls on his knees and begs (just as he had done with the king) and begs him saying, “Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.” But

the man refuses his to be patient with his friend and had him thrown into prison “until he could repay the debt,” which was impossible, since he could not work in prison.

However, somebody heard about what happened and when and told the king.

The king became real angry. The king summoned the servant he had forgiven and said to him, “You wicked servant, I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. You should have showed the same mercy to your fellow servant just like I did to you” (Matthew 18:33). You should have had pity on him. At the end of the story Jesus saw that the king was so angry with him that he turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should he should pay back all he owed.

There are many issues and differences to divide us. Love is what makes life wonderful. Jesus was not just talking to hear himself talk; love is the language of the kingdom of heaven. Forgiveness may not always be easy, but it is necessary if we want our lives to be blessed. To live like Jesus is to forgive.

In conclusion, let us be reminded that an unforgiving spirit provides a home for bitterness, sickness and disease. We need to be free to provide love and encouragement to others. Forgiveness is divine.

Third Sermon “Another Chance to do the Right Thing”

Another Chance to do the Right Thing

Text: Philippians 3:12-3:14

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus (NRSV).

For a subject I am using “Another Chance to do the Right Thing” Paul went through a transformation having met Jesus. The transformation was so great that Jesus changed his name from Saul to Paul. Saul was a religious man. A well-educated man. A man with position and power. He had connection with the governing authorities. He was a killer, a murderer of those who named the name of Jesus. He performed this task with much zeal. However, in a moment, Jesus came to him and gave him another chance to do the right thing. He was stopped in his tracks and given a new assignment and a new name. He now had a new goal. He tells us in Philippians 3:13 that first he must forget those things which are behind him and go forward. He was given another chance to do the right thing.

It is written in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NRSV)

¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

In other words, God gives us another chance to do the right thing. When we accept Christ, we are made new; our sins are forgiven; and we are reconciled to God. We are made righteous through Jesus. The scripture also states that he has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

A ministry as defined by Dictionary.com is the service, functions, or profession of a minister of religion. Reconciliation means an act of reconciling, as when former

enemies agree to an amicable truce. The base word is reconcile which carries among its meanings the following: to cause (a person) to accept or be resigned to something not desired: (He was reconciled to his fate), 2. to win over to friendliness; cause to become amicable: (*to reconcile hostile persons.*) 3. to compose or settle (a quarrel, dispute, etc.). 4. to bring into agreement or harmony; make compatible or consistent: (*to reconcile differing statements; to reconcile accounts*). It appears to me that being given the profession bringing things into harmony or agreement was an important assignment. We are to persuade other to accept Christ and be reconciled to God. Reconciliation simply put is another chance to do the right thing.

In the story of the prodigal son, a young man leaves home with money and comes back home broke, broken and embarrassed. A young man made a choice to leave a comfortable home and go off into the world. The bible says he took his part of the inheritance. An inheritance is something you receive at the death of the owner. You can tell there was some wrong thinking going on because this young man wanted possession of his portion before his father died. His wrong thinking led to his downfall. And he fell way, way down: down to the pig pen. Pigs and swill and husk were his lot. One day the young man came to his senses. He got up and went home and was reconciled to his father where he was forgiven and got a second chance to do the right thing.

In conclusion, our second chance should lead us into a new life with Christ whereby we actually have an impact on our culture. Let Jesus lead you:

Let Jesus lead you
 Let Jesus lead you
 Let Jesus lead you
 All the way,
 All the way from
 Earth to heaven

Let Jesus lead you
All the way.⁵

He's a mighty good leader and the God of a second chance.

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. AMEN.

⁵ Dottie Peoples, "Let Jesus Lead You," Invubu, accessed October 22, 2014, <http://www.invubu.com>.

APPENDIX C

BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study Summary

A three-week bible study was also conducted utilizing the biblical foundation scriptures in Jeremiah 31: 1-6 to show how God promised to restore Israel after the falling away. The epistle to Philemon was used to show the relation to God's forgiving and receiving mankind to himself and to mankind's directive to be willing to do the same for others. God is love and his love must flow through one to another.

March 4, 2015

“Love”

Love one another.

- 1 Jn 4:7-8: “⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
- Jn 13:34-35 (NRSV): “³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- Jn 3:16 (NRSV): “¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”
- 1 Cor 13
 - Love is patient, kind and great
 - Love is not envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, irritable, resentful, nor selfish
 - Love hopes, bears, rejoices, believes, endures and never ends

Love requires forgiveness.

- Eph 4:32 (NRSV): “¹²and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”
- Col 3:14, 17: “¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” “¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

March 11, 2015

“Forgiveness (Part 1)”

The importance of forgiveness

Mt 6:14-15 (NRSV): “¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

- We all want other to forgive us, but do not want to forgive others.
 - Jesus makes it clear that we must forgive if we want to be forgiven. We cannot have one without the other.
- Forgiveness effects our emotions
 - Unforgiving people harbor bitterness (a disease of the spirit)
 - Unforgiving people may experience physical illness
- Forgiveness effects our minds, hearts and our bodies
 - It keeps our minds focused on unpleasant things
- We cannot get rid of emotional pain if we refuse to forgive
 - Anger causes chemicals that attack the body.

- Forgiveness does not condone bad behavior and may not change another's behavior
- Not forgiving is disobedience to God
- How often should one forgive (Mt 18:21-22)
- Biblical examples on how to forgive can lead to greatness (One such story is of Joseph: ref. Gen 39- 49)

March 18, 2015

“Forgiveness (Part 2)”

- Mt 18:23-35 - The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant - (Begin reading at 23).
³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?
³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”
- Each Christian worship service is a chance to show thankfulness for God's forgiveness
- In the bible there are numerous narratives of God granting second chances
 - Abraham and Sarah – God fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah and gave them a son in light of their disobedience. (Gen 12)
 - Paul – When Paul was Saul of Tarsus, he killed Christians, even participated in stoning Stephen. He was converted on the road to Damascus. He is given credit for writing sixteen books of the New Testament. (Acts 6:8- 8:3)

- Peter - Peter denied Christ three times. Even so, Christ forgave him and he became one of Christ's greatest disciples. (Lk 22:54-62, Mt 16:13-18)
- Jonah - God wanted Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh, but Jonah was unforgiving of the people of Nineveh because of previous dealings. However, God redirected his path. (Jon 1-2)
- 1 John 3 (NRSV) – “²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.”

March 25, 2015

“Reconciliation”

Reconciliation

- Definition : the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement; the process of finding a way to make two different ideas, facts, etc., exist or be true at the same time.¹
 - The meaning common to this word group is “change” or “exchange.”
 - Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man or man and man.
 - Rom 5:6-11
 - 2 Cor 5:17
 - 2 Cor 5:18

¹ *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 10 edition, “Reconciliation” (Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, Inc., 2001), 974.

- This message of reconciliation or salvation has come from God through Christ and has been passed on to us.

- 2 Cor 5:18-21

- The whole message of reconciliation is centered on the love of God and the death of Christ.

- Rom 5:8

God has reconciled the world, not counting people's sins against them. If God has reconciled the world, do we have the right to hold one's sins against them? (Rom 5)

APPENDIX D

SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE PRESENTATION

Overview

The Superior Court Judge Michael DeVane was quite welcoming of the idea that someone in the community was willing to put forth the effort to engage the community in working in the area of reentry.

Judge DeVane's Presentation

Judge DeVane re-emphasized the need for rebuilding lives. He explained to the audience that he handled the Waycross Criminal Courts now and that there are four judges and who rotate around. He indicated that there was a great back log in cases. And even though they were chipping away at it and were making progress; he realized that justice needed to be swift. "Persons incarcerated need to get their time served and get on back out there and become productive. A person charged with an offense waiting on a trial or probation revocation needs a timely hearing. I'm pushing and others are pushing to try to move the things along and become more efficient with it."¹ Judge DeVane indicated that from his perspective, there are so many lives that are just practically destroyed, but there is always hope for those people if we can give them that helping hand. He indicated that in the court here in Ware County a lot of the backlog is due to recidivism. He stated:

While trying to reduce that back long and deal with the problems in our community, I see men and women called up. And you know we used that term revolving door. But it is most certain a revolving door of arrest and then court appearance and then jail or prison, then release, then arrest again and on and on it goes. I have lived here since 1982, been a prosecutor for many years, and saw many people. Then I became a judge, and I just see the folks that were before me

¹ DeVane, "Untitled Presentation."

in court as a prosecutor and they just continue to be in that revolving door, names are so familiar, there are so many of them. It is so hard to break that cycle but it can be done. With God's help and our hard work it can be done.²

Judge DeVane indicated that for the last three years, 2012 to 2014, there was an average of about 453 new felony cases in Ware County every year. That number did not include misdemeanors or reinstatement orders or the magistrate court charges. It did not include probation revocation, just brand new felony cases that were brought before the court, averaging 453 every year. He explained that those cases must be addressed every year to stay up with the work load. In addition, there are those persons who come in for arraignment, whose cases we try to dispose of within three to four months either by plea or a trial or whatever the process requires to dispose of that case. He indicated that most times, if they plead guilty or are found guilty, they are placed on probation.

² DeVane, "Untitled Presentation."

APPENDIX E

PAROLE OFFICER PRESENTATION

Parole Officer Chuck Chancey – “Untitled Presentation”

Parole Officer Chuck Chancey spoke during Session One. He shared that part of parole is reentry into the community. He pointed out that his job as the parole officer is to provide effective supervision for that individual once they get out. He noted that from his perspective, when somebody gets out of prison, the first thing they would do is proclaim never to return. However, when asked what their plan was to stay out, they indicated that they had no plan. It becomes clear that you are working with a person with no plan for their future, limited education, limited work experience, and /or alcohol and drug issues, along with mental health issues. He likened probation to the adage “it takes a village to raise a child.” Thus it takes a community, mom, dad, grandma, etc. to help a person get through parole.

He found that those persons who came in and really wanted to apply themselves were the ones who had some kind of support system at home and contacts in the community to help them get a job. “The others are two types: (1) those who get bad reports such as testing positive for drug usage and technical violation and (2) those who are found to pose a threat to themselves and to the community. The issue is that many time you see the same people over and over.”¹ He indicated that it is hard to break that cycle especially when they come back into the community when as soon as they walk out the door, there might be a drug dealer saying come over here the first ones on me. It’s so easy to fall back into that environment.

¹ Chuck Chancey, “Untitled Presentation.”

Mr. Chancey informed the group that the state now has a Reentry Support program which has been instituted in major cities such as Atlanta, Savannah, Augusta and Columbus. The governor realized that there was the problem of recidivism across the state and has reached out to try and involve the faith community as a part of that state wide effort.

APPENDIX F

PROBATION OFFICER PRESENTATION

PROBATION OFFICER – CHRIS GONZALES

The Probation officer, Chris Gonzales, emphasized that his job was to enforce the rule of probation. He gave an overview of his work. He did not have a written presentation nor handouts.

APPENDIX G
SHERIFF PRESENTATION

Sheriff Randy Royal – “Untitled Presentation”

Sheriff Royal discussed his role as keeper of the jail for Ware County. He explained that he had a 500 bed facility and as of today there were approximately 350 inmates. Also, he noted that no one knew better than he the revolving door system that exists. He was discouraged to see so much talent wasted. He suggested that there are those who belong in jail and the community is safer with them being in jail. However, he noted that there are those who get caught in between. He stated:

As keeper of the jail, my hands are limited to a certain extent. I'm bound by some writ or directive that command me to hold a person until the court says otherwise. But I'm willing to do anything I can to share about a good inmate. Yesterday I spoke about a good inmate; we speak to the extent that we can without violating ex- partite communications. We talk about inmates, those that really need and would be safe to be released. Judge Gibson too realizes that we cannot warehouse everybody. There has to be another way. Turning people around or at least putting them on the right tract with the right support once they leave jail or prison, whichever it may be.¹

¹ Randy Royal, “Untitled Presentation.”

APPENDIX H
PRE-SURVEY

Pre-Survey and Post-Survey						
Your answers are confidential! Put an X in the box that most accurately represents your opinion.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1. Most people who have been incarcerated are dangerous.						
2. Most people who have been incarcerated are dishonest.						
3. I would avoid associating with anyone who has recently been incarcerated.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
4. Many people who are incarcerated do not deserve to be there.						
5. Many people convicted of crimes in the courts are actually innocent.						
6. It would be a big deal if one of my neighbors was incarcerated.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
7. I have a great deal of respect for the police.						
8. Overall, I think the police are honest.						
9. I feel proud of the police.						
10. I feel people should support the police.						

	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
11. The courts generally guarantee everyone a fair hearing or trial.						
12. The basic rights of citizens are protected in the courts.						
13. Overall, judges in the courts here are honest.						
14. Court decisions here are almost always fair.						
	None	A Few	Several	Many		
15. How many people have you known personally or professionally who have been incarcerated?						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot		
16. Where you live, how often does crime happen?						
	Yes	No				
17. Have you or a family member ever been a victim of a crime?						
	I am Male	I am Female				
18. Gender						
	African American (non-Hispanic)	Hispanic (non-White)	White (non-Hispanic)	Other		
19. Race/Ethnicity						
	Less than high school	Some high school	High school graduate	Some college	College graduate	Post college graduate

20. Education						
	Yes	No				
21. Are there children under age 18 in your household?						

APPENDIX I
POST-SURVEY

Pre-Survey and Post-Survey						
Your answers are confidential! Put an X in the box that most accurately represents your opinion.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
22. Most people who have been incarcerated are dangerous.						
23. Most people who have been incarcerated are dishonest.						
24. I would avoid associating with anyone who has recently been incarcerated.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
25. Many people who are incarcerated do not deserve to be there.						
26. Many people convicted of crimes in the courts are actually innocent.						
27. It would be a big deal if one of my neighbors was incarcerated.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
28. I have a great deal of respect for the police.						
29. Overall, I think the police are honest.						
30. I feel proud of the police.						
31. I feel people should support the police.						

	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
32. The courts generally guarantee everyone a fair hearing or trial.						
33. The basic rights of citizens are protected in the courts.						
34. Overall, judges in the courts here are honest.						
35. Court decisions here are almost always fair.						
	None	A Few	Several	Many		
36. How many people have you known personally or professionally who have been incarcerated?						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot		
37. Where you live, how often does crime happen?						
	Yes	No				
38. Have you or a family member ever been a victim of a crime?						
	I am Male	I am Female				
39. Gender						
	African American (non-Hispanic)	Hispanic (non-White)	White (non-Hispanic)	Other		
40. Race/Ethnicity						
	Less than high school	Some high school	High school graduate	Some college	College graduate	Post college graduate

41. Education						
	Yes	No				
42. Are there children under age 18 in your household?						

APPENDIX J
QUESTIONNAIRE

Reentry Support Questionnaire

Using a **scale of 1-5** circle the number that best reflects your feeling (*with 5 being strongly agree*)

1. This forum was informative (*totally disagree*) 1 2 3 4 5(*strongly agree*)

2. My understanding of the faith community's role in supporting reentry of offenders into the community was changed by this event. (*totally disagree*) 1 2 3 4 5(*strongly agree*)

3. I believe the faith community of Waycross should help ex-offenders with reentry into the community. (*totally disagree*) 1 2 3 4 5(*strongly agree*)

4. I feel _____ % of members at my church would support outreach ministry to ex-offenders. (25% 50% 75% 100%)

5. I feel my pastor would encourage our congregation to ministry to ex-offenders. (*totally disagree*) 1 2 3 4 5(*strongly agree*)

6. The most helpful aspect of this forum was: _____

7. I wish there had been more information on: _____

8. I (am/ am not) willing to help start a mentoring/ support ministry at my church.

9. Two major obstacles to starting a reentry ministry at my church are:
 1. _____ 2. _____

10. Other comments and/or question(s) _____

APPENDIX K

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION PRESENTATION

“Biblical Foundation for Prison Ministry: A Ministry of Reentry.”
Summary of Presentation:

Dr. Cummings’ power point presentation was entitled, “Biblical Foundation for Prison Ministry: A Ministry of Reentry.” As the starting point, Dr. Cummings address Dr. Howard Thurman’s poignant question in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*, “What does the religion of Jesus have to say to those who live with their backs up against a wall?” As people of faith there are categories of people who live with their backs up against a wall. It has already been pointed out by many of the handicap and the hardship deficits that prisoners face: lack of education, no skills, addiction and mental health and the list continues.

So how does people of faith respond to the teachings of Jesus Christ? “Charles Darwin espouses in his work *Survival of the Species* that the stronger defeats the weak in the animal society, but Christian teachings reject this notion. In her book, *Beyond Our Selves*, Catherine Marshall points out that one third of Jesus’ ministry was devoted to healing and comforting people.” People who are in prison and those who are reentering do have some level of sickness. In going beyond ourselves, going outside the box, how do we move forward as disciples of Christ?

Valid points to be made are that “many contend that law and order must prevail and that prisoners must not be coddled.” Following this mindset, a number of laws were enacted in previous years by state legislatures and federal government that imposed new laws and mandated a range of penalties for certain violations. As a result more and more people found themselves locked up for longer periods of time. People of color and poor people in general find themselves with harsher penalties than others. What then is the churches response to those who are incarcerated and released? Let them do their time and

return to society and maybe they will not break the law again.” What then do we do as a people of faith? This is a beginning point.

Under community scan Dr. Cumming posits that “one of the challenges that the Church faces is that of an environment scan of its community—the immediate Zip Code (last four digits). Jesus said to each of his disciples: “you shall be my witnesses first in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and in other parts of the world.” Therefore, mission begins at home. Ministry begins at home. There are resources available to do this through U. S. Census records as well as the demographic data of local communities. In such scan one find numbers about population, race, gender, class, education levels, home owners or renters and more. (The panelist and presenters have all spoken to this to some extent). There is not a column for ex-cons and reentry. One thing, however, through court records and parole offices one can get a scan of the number of persons. A simpler approach is just asks members or someone you know about who has recently reenter society.

Reasons for incarceration: “There is an easy answer for why people are incarcerated and go to jail; they break the law. The statistics, of which I will not go into, are staggering when one considers the percentage of persons who are arrested and later convicted for crimes while they were on drugs or stealing to get money to buy drugs. Hence, drug addiction is a significant factor in people who are imprisoned.

Biblical Passages: Welcoming Strangers:

“The bible has much to say about welcoming strangers. The Hebrew writers tell the story as a reminder that they too as a people were strangers in a strange land. Men and women returning to society after prison sentence too are looked upon as strangers and are

numbered, to a certain degree, as strangers. The point I want to make here is that the bible says something about sin. If you sin, how many times am I to forgive my neighbor: “seventy times seven.” So the Bible has some broad comments about the what-to and the how-to; but in other instances, it does not. And in those instances in terms of ex-offenders, then we have to look through the lens of Jesus. The Jesus lens help us to try and get an understanding of what would Jesus say or what Jesus would do based on what Jesus has said or done in previous and other situations. As a results we have to scan the word of God and see where there are instances and references where individuals were strangers or outcast or were in need. And then what does the Hebrew Scriptures have to say about the response of people of faith?”

The following list of bible verses comes from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible:

- Deuteronomy 10:19 - You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
- Leviticus 19:34 - The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizens among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.
- Matthew 5:43-44 - You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy; but I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.
- Matthew 25:40–41 - Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren you did it to me.

When we look collectively at these passages, they speak to us as a people as to how we as a people can help somebody in need. There’s a song that says “If I can help somebody, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living would not be in vain.” The whole idea is to glean from these passages and to realize that this is not just a program.

Programs are nice and I don't want to devalue them, but we are talking about ministries, intentional ministries where people of faith can articulate what the scripture says and can articulate the present reality in which we all live.

Romans 13:8 says we are to "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:10 reads, "Love does not wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is fulfilling of the law." The whole idea is that this can be a templet for a bible study to begin the process. This can be a templet for a sermon series to articulate the word of God. This can be a templet for a manual about the biblical foundation of what we do, what we attempt to do as a people of faith. Acts 10:34-35 further strengthen this point. Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Revelation 21:3 reads, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them.'" 3 John 1:5 reads, "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for friends, even though they are strangers to you; they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting not support from non-believers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth." Luke 10:27 reads, "You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." There's no telling how the lives of these two young men (in the audience) have been and continue to be impacted because of the love. There is a popular saying, and I say it often. It is by Oscar Hammerstein, "A bell is not a bell until

you ring it, and a song is not a song until you sing it. Love is not put into your heart to stay. Love is not love until you give it away.” The whole idea of the biblical passage of welcoming strangers, in this case people (ex-prisoners) who want a second chance, is that we have a mandate to help and give them an opportunity. So these are some of the biblical foundations that aid us in moving forward.

At this point a video clip was shown entitled: *How Two Bitter Enemies Became Friends*.

We have more in common than things that separate us. When an individual is helped along the way and strengthened, the community is safer. And that individual in turn can teach others who are coming along that path as well as share insight to other persons who are in a position to make change. We must seize the opportunity presented to us to try and do something.

APPENDIX L

REENTRY SUPPORT FORUM

April 25, 2015
Quality Inn
Waycross, Georgia
Event Schedule

8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. – Registration /Pre – Survey Breakfast
9:45 a.m. – Welcome /General Information – Rev. Linda Titus
9:50 a.m. – Greetings - Mayor Clarence Billups
9:55 a.m. – Overview - Rev. Carolyn Shorter

Session I

Reality Check (The truth about reentry)

10:00 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. Judge Michael DeVane
10:20 a.m.– 10:40 a.m. Chuck Chancey, Parole Officer
10:40 a.m. – 10:55 a.m. BREAK

Session II

The Journey and the Need

11:00 a.m. Pastor Samuel Sellers

Q & A – PANEL

Judge Michael DeVane	Parole Officer Chuck Chancey
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr.	Sheriff Randy Royal
Probation Officer Cindy Hampton	Pastor Samuel Sellers
Probation Officer Chris Gonzales	Rev. Carolyn Shorter

11:40 – 11:45 a.m. BREAK

Session III

Biblical Mandate

11:45 a. m. – 12:05 p.m. Biblical Foundation – Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr.
12:05 p.m. – 12:15 p.m. Table talk
Discuss role of the Faith Community 5 min.
(1 person report 1 sentence from discussion)
Post-Survey
Closing

A Collaborative Model for the Restoration and Renewal
of Ex-offenders returning to Society

The aim of this project is to engage the community in outreach to ex-offenders. The goal is that each church would have a trained team to mentor ex-offenders, offering support, connecting them with resources in the community, giving spiritual guidance and involving them in decision making activities that would aid them in coping with the challenges of reentry into the community.

Studies have shown that connecting ex-offenders to supportive programs as quickly as possible greatly enhances the probability of them remaining crime-free, thus adding to the safety of our community.

Important Note

Each church or organization would select the person or persons they would be willing to work with.

Team training is necessary in order to successfully mentor those persons returning to society.

“I was a stranger, and you did not invite me into your home. I was naked, and you did not give me clothing. I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me.”

Matthew 25:43

Event Volunteers

Mr. Marvin Atkins
Rev. Tawanna Boyd
Ms. Rosa Douglas
Bishop Frances E. Fields
Mr. Guy Harris
Mrs. Yolanda Hill
Dr. Andrew Jackson
Ms. Joyce Berry Sams
Mr. McKinley Shorter
Mrs. Pamela Smith
Rev. Linda Titus

Resources Persons

Mayor Clarence Billups
Judge Michael DeVane
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr.
Chuck Chancey, Parole Officer
Pastor Samuel Sellers
Randy Royal, Sheriff
Cindy Hampton, Probation Officer
Chris Gonzales, Probation Officer

APPENDIX M
PROJECT TIMELINE

Timeline

- February 1, 2015 – First of a three sermon series
- February 3, 2015 – Contact professional and context associates to plan meeting time
- February 8, 2015 – Second of a three sermon series
- February 12, 2015 – First Meeting of Context Associates Those in attendance were Mr. Marvin Atkins, Mrs. Lisa Brown, Mr. D. Brown, Rev. Tawanna Boyd, Pastor at Austin Chapel CME Church Waycross, Ms. Rosa Douglas, Bishop Frances E. Fields, Faith Outreach Ministries, Mr. Guy Harris, Trustee Pro-tem and Steward at Bethel St-Luke AME Church. retired military, currently enrolled in Master's Degree Program, Yolanda F. Hill, former corrections officer, Dr. Andrew Jackson, General Dentistry, Jackson Family Dentistry, Waycross and Willacoochee, Joyce Berry Sams, Steward Pro-tem at Bethel- St. Luke AME Church, Waycross, Mrs. Pamela Smith, Stewardess, Rev. Linda Titus, M-Div. United Theological Seminary; and Presenter Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr.

Subsequent meetings were held to brainstorm and to make definite plans for the Forum.

- February 15, 2015 – Third of a three sermon series
- March 4, 2015 – Bible Study at Bethel St Luke AME - Love
- March 11, 2015 – Bible Study at Bethel-St Luke AME - Forgiveness
- March 12, 2015 – Context Associates Planning Meeting - Austin Chapel CME
- March 18, 2015 – Bible Study at Bethel- St. Luke AME - Forgiveness
- March 19, 2015 – Context Associates Planning Meeting-Austin Chapel CME
- March 25, 2015 – Bible Study at Bethel – St. Luke AME - Reconciliation

- March 26, 2015 – Context Associates Planning Meeting -Austin Chapel CME
- April 9, 2015 – Context Associates Planning Meeting -Faith Outreach Ministries
- April 23, 2015 – Context Associates Planning Meeting -Faith Outreach Ministries
- April 25, 2015 – Pre-Survey
- April 25, 2015 – Forum on Reentry
- April 25, 2015 – Post-Survey and Questionnaire

APPENDIX N
STAKEHOLDERS

Contextual Associates

- (1) Mr. Marvin Atkins
- (2) Rev. Tawanna Boyd, M-Div., Pastor at Austin Chapel CME Church, Waycross
- (3) Ms. Rosa Douglas
- (4) Bishop Frances E. Fields, pastor of Faith Outreach Ministries
- (5) Mr. Guy Harris, Trustee Pro-tem and Steward at Bethel St-Luke AME Church, Waycross, retired military, currently enrolled in Master's Degree Program
- (6) Yolanda F. Hill, former corrections officer
- (7) Dr. Andrew Jackson, General Dentistry, Jackson Family Dentistry, Waycross and Willacoochee, Georgia
- (8) Deaconess Joyce Berry Sams, Steward Pro-tem at Bethel- St. Luke AME Church, Waycross
- (9) Mrs. Pamela Smith, Steward Bethel St-Luke AME Church, Waycross
- (10) Rev. Linda Titus, M-Div., United Theological Seminary
- (11). Judge Michael DeVane, Georgia School of Law, Superior Court Judge

Professional Associates

- (12) Rev. Dr. Bernard Clarke, DMin., United Theological Seminary
- (13) Rev. Dr. Kathleen Joseph, DMin., United Theological Seminary
- (14) Judge Michael DeVane, Superior Court Judge

APPENDIX O

TESTIMONY

Minister Samuel Sellers, "Untitled Personal Testimony"

Session Two, "The Journey and the Need" featured Minister Samuel Sellers who shared his personal journey. After greetings, He began with the scripture: "My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6). He began, "But if you are here today to obtain knowledge, to share my experience with you, I believe when we leave here today, we will leave here with a better understanding of what we need to do, what God is calling us to do right here in Waycross."¹

Minister Sellers continued: "I was raised in a house with single parent. My mother raised me and my two brothers and a sister. I was taught how to work. I worked all the time, my whole life. During school, I missed twenty days. I worked all night long. I was not really dumb. The fact is that I was always working. I got married about the age of twenty-seven and got hurt on the job. Workers comp took about six months to pay; the bills kept piling up, and I had a baby and got on food stamps. Thank God for food stamps. But I was forced, I say I was forced, that's just a way of trying to make it sound good. I got out in the world and started selling drugs because I felt I had to take care of my family. The world says this is what I have to do. So I made one mistake in my life. Let's put it the way the bible puts it; and it says we have all sinned. So if you looking down on me, you are looking down on yourself. A lot of people have committed crimes before but just did not get caught."²

This was a powerful testimony.

Minister Sellers founded Upper Room Ministries where he and his wife mentor teenagers. He also is an entrepreneur and has hired several persons. He brought two young (adolescence) males to the Forum. He shared that they were two of eleven children (with four different step dads). All of these men, including these youth's father were

¹ Samuel Sellers, "Personal Testimony," "Reentry Support Forum," Waycross, Georgia, April 25, 2015.

² Sellers, "Personal Testimony."

killed in the streets of Miami, Florida. Their mother took them from Miami to the Waycross, Georgia, area in hope that they could find a better life. Mostly everyone in the forum, including the presenters, were moved by this story. Seller said, “They left Miami to come looking for a safe place, a safe environment. And 99 % of all our kids have no father. What road would they take? “I grew up without a father and I ask myself who’s leading them who is teaching them to steer them away from going into prison.”³

³ Sellers, “Personal Testimony.”

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